

# On The Veranda

Spring 2005

News from the Park-McCullough House Association

## Our 37th Season

On May 15th, 2005 Park-McCullough will open for its 37th season as a cultural resource and historic estate, museum, and regional tourism destination. What makes this season so special is that it also marks the 140th anniversary of the construction of the Big House by Trenor Park. Park and his family, wife Laura, daughters Lizzie and Lila, and son Train (Trenor Jr.) moved into the house on Christmas Day 1865. While the family also lived in New York City, their Vermont home was a treasured retreat for four generations. In 1966 John G. McCullough inherited the Big House; it was formally deeded to the Association in 1975, with the stated mission being the preservation, conservation, and restoration of its buildings, grounds, and collections so that they could be “shared with the public for its education and enjoyment.” John McCullough and Bill and Babs (McCullough) Scott continued to support the house throughout their lifetimes and after.

There are numerous descendants of the Hall, Park, and McCullough family descendants who continue to be associated with PMHA; Hiland Hall Turner is currently a Trustee; Allen McCullough is chairing this October’s second annual Big House Golf Classic; and Paul Scott has recently donated a portion of his mother, Babs Scott’s, papers and artifacts to the Association. Members of the Hall, Turner, Gibson, McCullough, and Scott families continue to visit, and support the Park-McCullough through a variety of activities.

This season will highlight different aspects of Park-McCullough’s history. May, designated by the National



**The Big House is 140 years old this year and better than ever.**

Trust as Preservation month, will focus on the architecture, preservation, and restoration of Park-McCullough, as well as the original technology employed in the house. June will emphasize the “Ladies and Gents” of Park-McCullough, focusing on specific family members. July will highlight servant life, based on the Education Program’s “Servant for a Day” program. August will emphasize celebrations at Park-McCullough, especially President Benjamin Harrison’s visit to the house in 1891. August will also see the Park McCullough House Association’s own gala on August 6th. September will emphasize family heritage and family contributions. Tours reflecting these themes will take place on Sundays at two p.m., each month having a different tour.

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## Membership is Growing

Our annual membership drive is underway. Last year we switched from a “rolling” membership format, where reminders were sent monthly for expiring memberships, to the once-a-year drive. When you renew your membership this Spring, you will be a member for a full year and not have to worry about when you need to renew. We think that this is a much cleaner solution, avoiding confusion with the fall Annual Fund drive.

Membership for the 2004 season rang in at 272, the highest it has been for a number of years. Our goal for the 2005 season is 300. Please help us achieve our target; renew now and please consider giving a membership as a gift to a family member or friend.

Your support of Park-McCullough through membership is very important. It provides financial support, and ensures that we can continue to be in touch with you through the newsletter and other special event mailings.

**Seeking a room  
for rent or small apartment  
in the Bennington area.**

Park-McCullough may be hosting one or two interns from Smith College this summer and we need your help to find them housing. If you have any rooms or suggestions, please give us a call!

# Carriage Barn News

During the off season, we've been inventorying and photographing all major pieces of art in our collection to determine status, provenance, and location, and to cross reference existing materials. We've also been organizing the miscellaneous prints, photographs, and picture frames on the third floor. Located in the Director's Office, is a catalogue research file for each of the 92 paintings in the collection. Work continues as we catalogue sculptures, lithographs, and prints.

Other efforts include inventorying and cleaning several rooms on the third floor, matching objects with their accession cards, and examining them for condition and quality. The holiday decorations have been moved from various closets and other locations in the main part of the Big House and are temporarily being housed in room 1301 on the third floor. We will now be interpreting these former storage spaces as part of the regular house tour, including the rediscovered "secret staircase" in Esther's Room.

The largest project by far, is the house inventory. We have made great progress this year on this challenging project, which was started years ago. The inventory allows us to understand the scope of what is in our collections at Park-McCullough. Room by room, we've been assessing the contents and matching it with accession cards. For those items without cards, temporary cards have been made. We have also created binders for each room, which contain lists of that room's contents and the accession cards for those objects.

Many thanks to volunteer Diane Welebit, and Caitlin Gray, an intern from Bennington College, for their extensive assistance in these endeavors.

Phebe Bell and Cora May Howe have been continuing to catalogue and organize our collection of slides, photographs, and other items in our image collection. Please let us know if you'd like to assist us in this endeavor.

The Carriage Barn Task Force, which has been meeting for the past 10 months, has produced a Facilities Planning Report that assesses expanded use of the carriage barn in light of the overall goals and long-term space needs of Park-McCullough. The report provides a blueprint for improvements, making the carriage barn a more versatile facility to support the programs and activities of Park-McCullough.

It is the desire of the Trustees to make the carriage barn usable on a year-round basis, instead of on the current 6 month, May through October schedule. Rentals of the facility for special events are an increasingly important revenue stream for the organization, and doubling the availability of the carriage barn would be an important financial gain.

The first important step is to upgrade to the electrical service. Director Matthew Schulte, architect Jon Traver, Chair Bob Brower, and the Carriage Barn Task Force have been working with Central Vermont Public Service and Paul Scott, owner of the Hall Farmhouse, to bring 400 amps of underground electrical service to the carriage barn.

Thanks to a final disbursement to Park-McCullough from the estate of Babs Scott, this project will be accomplished in the Spring.

Once sufficient power is available, the next step will be to install heating and ventilation systems that will allow for year-round use. In addition, there are also plans to bury cables for DSL phone service and high-speed cable for future capabilities. Further plans for the carriage barn call for upgrading the catering kitchen, adding additional rest rooms, improving access to the Education Center, providing storage space for the carriage collection, and designating space for additional parking.

The staff and board are confident that these improvements will greatly enhance Park-McCullough's financial position, by bringing in revenue on a year round basis. Cultural institutions nationwide are feeling the effects of a drop-off in bus tours and individual visitors. As a result of the carriage barn renovations, Park-McCullough is able to position itself as an historic destination and as a venue for special events, thereby allowing us to adjust to changing cultural and economic demands.

## Volunteer Orientation & Luncheon

Park-McCullough will kick off our 37th season with a volunteer workshop and luncheon on April 28th from 10-3 at the Big House. This will be a chance for seasoned volunteers and those who might be interested in joining our volunteer team to learn about our progress in the off season, and to explore the array of volunteer opportunities. It is also an opportunity to see new and exciting discoveries made this winter in the collections.

After Opening Day, May 15th, we expect to retain the structure of morning and afternoon shifts for docents and to continue with regular scheduled time slots for volunteers, which helps the whole organization run smoothly. On days when we have scheduled bus tours, we will need to double up on docents. In addition, it will be necessary to provide guides for wedding parties that have requested tours for their guests as part of their event.

There are also plans to offer specialized tours, much like those developed by the Education Program for school groups. These will focus on specific family members, generations, or themes, such as architecture, servant life, or special events at the House. Your help and experience will be essential in developing these tours.

Our most critical need is (as always) for docents and gift shop workers, especially on weekends. But there are many other important ways in which you can help behind the scenes, as well. We need help with bulk mailings, organizing association documents (past event info, old records, etc.), grounds work, as well as organizing and documenting the collections. We will review some of these additional opportunities for volunteer work at the meeting, so please join us on April 28th for lunch and orientation.

## Work Continues Around the Big House



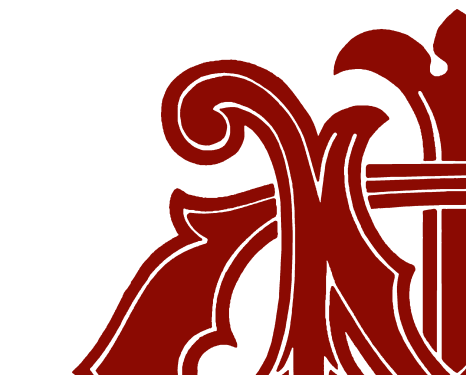
Track lighting is removed in giftshop...



...exposing the elegant details of the breakfast room plaster medallion



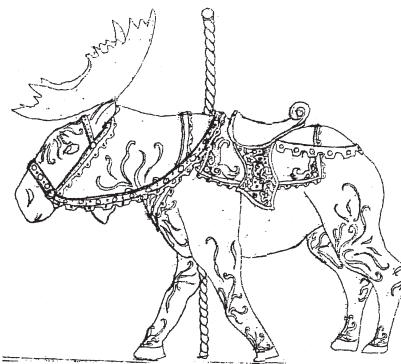
Restoration expert Rory Brennan repairs Dining Room moulding.



# The Big House Gets a Moose

As most residents of Bennington and the surrounding area are aware, the Bennington Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a Moosefest this summer, in which Park-McCullough is participating and also benefiting. Fifty-seven large, decorated fiberglass moose, each sponsored by a local business or organization will be placed around the community from May through October to draw visitors from here and away. At the end of the Moosefest, a gala celebration will be held to auction off the works of art and whimsy, with the profits going to four local non-profit organizations that provide educational programs for children. Park-McCullough is thrilled to be one of the recipients of the proceeds, along with the Bennington Museum, the Vermont Arts Exchange and the Old Castle Theatre Company.

Park-McCullough will host its own moose, created by local artist Alley Marie Bourgeois to resemble a carousel figure. She is incorporating in the moose design, various Hall, Park, and McCullough family emblems and monograms, as well as motifs found throughout the Park-McCullough collections. Alley was born and raised in Bennington and started creating at an early age, drawing, painting and sewing, improvising with materials as she went. A number of her murals adorned the walls of area schools as she moved through the Bennington school system. She is also a talented performer, singing in numerous musicals



Sketch of carousel moose design by local artist Alley Marie Bourgeois.

and playing saxophone and French horn in school bands. In addition to her artwork, Alley employs her talents as a seamstress at R. John Wright Inc., doll manufacturer.

The members of the selection committee were Phebe Bell, Mary Kohler, and Matthew Schulte. Mary earmarked about a dozen potential designs in a preview and shared those choices with Phebe and Matthew. Executive Director Schulte noted that he and Phebe, “went to the selection reception, saw the carousel moose idea, and felt that its whimsical nature and unique adaptation would fit in well with the Big House’s eclecticism.”

Park-McCullough’s moose will be unveiled during the Opening Day festivities on May 15th. If you would like to suggest a name for our moose, which is currently without a moniker, send your ideas to [info@parkmccullough.org](mailto:info@parkmccullough.org).

## Just Desserts by Cathy Brawer

Lizzie and John McCullough gave two dinners in honor of President Benjamin Harrison in August 1891, when he came to Bennington in celebration of Vermont’s Centennial and stayed with the McCullough family. Each of the dinners ended with two dessert courses that Lizzie described in her diary. For the first dinner Lizzie served the president macaroons, lady fingers, jellies, ice cream, fruit, almonds, and

bonbons. When Park-McCullough reopens in May, the dining room table will be set as it might have looked on Tuesday, August 18, 1891, with period arrangements of flowers and fruits and historically accurate replicas of the desserts that were served. The elaborate dessert display will remain on view for the season. It has been made possible through a grant from the Ida and William Rosenthal Foundation.

## Hall-Park-McCullough Family Reunion

Trustee Hiland Hall Turner is planning a reunion of all members of the Hall, Park, and McCullough families and their descendants to be held at the Big House. To ensure the largest possible turn-out, we are asking family members to contact either Hiland at H 908-630-0887, W 908-696-0072, F 908-696-0073, [hilandh@hhta.com](mailto:hilandh@hhta.com), or the staff at 802.4425441 or [info@parkmccullough.org](mailto:info@parkmccullough.org)

## “The Moose Smooch” by Hiland Hall Turner

The “Moose Smooch” was much feared by the youngest and bravest of family members who would frequent the Big House on holidays. It was not so much of a kiss, as a face plant. This had become, and was for some time, a rite of passage. The ritual was to hold the least of us up eyeball to eyeball with the Moose in the Great Hall above the mantle and to “be allowed to kiss the Mouse on the lips”. A great honor (or was that horror) indeed!

You can just imagine the fear that a vile confrontation with a creature of such immense size, tremendous amount of hair, and gigantic horns from Hades would invoke in the smallest of beings. This “thing” seemed at first to be far enough away that it would be of no bother. Because it was some two stories in the air, the likelihood of a confrontation with this creature seemed highly unlikely. It seemed more likely therefore, that one could continue picking at the parquet floor and admiring the patterns of the magnificent rugs and their fringes. At this “level” and state of mind, dust balls would be the most dangerous things that would be encountered. That is, until the festivities were over and some great pair of hands descended upon your waist, and in a matter of milliseconds the impossible leap from ground floor to two stories in the air had occurred. Before you could catch your breath and open your eyes, the impossible and unbearable was before you. The great beast was assuredly ready for dinner and you could easily fit within one of its cavernous nostrils. The sounds of laughter and jeering came from the crowds below, and much like a gladiator, you grimaced at the inevitable and did not think kindly of the screaming hoards.

The beast came ever closer until finally your face was affixed to the hairy nostrils and lips of this prehistoric monster. At that point there was even more screaming from the multitudes below as the smell of stale shoes filled your nostrils.

The battle was nearly over. The moose had won yet another encounter with a small, but very fearful competitor. Dejected and shaken, the gladiator left the encounter with the knowledge that his place in history has been confirmed, for he had survived the moose smooch.

Even after surviving this ordeal, one still remembered to give this creature all the room it deserved. Upon entry to the Big House, one would travel through Mamma Betty’s study, cross the hall through the Billiard room to arrive at the Men’s parlor, and then run across the hall to the Women’s parlor and then back to the front doors. This would generally ensure that one gave to the beast all the respect that it deserved, and would more likely ensure one’s own survival. This battle would be fought further by another, even more gallant gladiator sometime in the future.

# Join with us!

## Become a member of the Park-McCullough House Association today...

Your support makes possible the ongoing revitalization of the house, grounds, and collections. It allows us to expand educational opportunities and programs. Most important, it allows us to continue to grow and serve the community in which we are an integral part.

Membership includes unlimited tours of the Park-McCullough House, subscription to our newsletter *On The Veranda*, plus special notices of upcoming events throughout the year.

Questions on membership benefits, or about making a legacy contribution in your will? Please contact us at 802-442-5441

**It's more than a house... it's Park-McCullough!**

## Membership Levels

### Regular

- \$45 Family/Dual
- \$25 Individual
- \$15 Senior/Student

### Enhanced

- \$500 Governor's Club
- \$250 Sustaining
- \$100 Supporting
- \$60 Contributing

Please mail your check payable to:  
Park-McCullough House Association  
P.O. Box 388, North Bennington, VT  
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## Upcoming Events

### Thursday April 28th: Volunteer Workshop

Orientation, Training & Luncheon

### Sunday, May 1st: Bennington Road Race 10 am

### Tuesday & Wednesday, May 17th & 18th:

### Children's Shakespeare Theater 7 pm

Winter's Tale - Sponsored in part by Merchant's Bank

### Sunday, May 15th: Community Open House 1 - 4 pm

Begins Park-McCullough's 37th season!

### Saturday, May 21st: Annual Garden Fair and Tag Sale 9 am - 3 pm

### Thursday, June 23rd: Croquet Begins

### Friday, June 24th: Park-McCullough Annual Meeting 6 pm

## Thank You

Many thanks to Jeromy Gardner of Bartlett Tree Service and his staff for donating an afternoon of services here at Park-McCullough. Work is ongoing and includes tree-trimming, removal of dead limbs, fertilization of trees and bushes, and treatment of diseased specimens.

Thank you to the Northshaft Lions for their \$50 contribution and for organizing their annual Easter Egg Hunt on the Park-McCullough grounds.

Many thanks to Merchant's Bank for underwriting the Children's Shakespeare Theatre, to take place at Park-McCullough in May.

We'd also like to thank our long-term members and supporters, Bill and Maria Scully, of Pangaea Restaurant and Maria Scully Massage. We regret that their names were inadvertently omitted from the acknowledgements in our last newsletter. We regret this oversight and we thank them again for all of their support.

We also thank the Orvis Company for their offer of a 40% discount on all merchandise purchased by the Park-McCullough House Association.

Phebe Bell and Mary Kohler have stepped down as co-managers of the gift shop; we thank them for all of their hard work!

Thank you to Magic Hat Brewing Company for their gift donation.