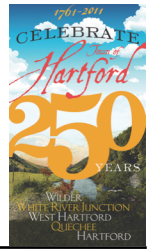




Hartford Historical Society

The Garipay House • 1461 Maple Street
Hartford Village, Vermont 05047

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Volume 30, No. 5

SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

September-October 2017

Hartford's J. Fulbert Demers Businessman, Builder, and Inventor

By Mary Nadeau

J. Fulbert Demers and his wife Bernadette were born in Canada in 1891 and 1894 respectively and immigrated to the U.S. as a young couple. Although his education was limited, Mr. Demers was highly intelligent, inventive and an astute businessman. The Upper Valley has log homes on Taft Flat still serving as homes that were built by Mr. Demers as part of his real estate development in the late 1940's and showcase his unique building style.

Mr. Demers' first local enterprise was the Demers Lumber Yard located in Wilder just beyond the steep curve at the north end of the village. All that remains on the site today is a brown bungalow that once served as the Demers family home. (The saw mill was sold in 1949.)

In 1937, Mr. Demers bought a large tract of vacant land between Hartford Avenue (an area still known as Taft Flat by long-time residents) and the Advent Campground along the Connecticut River. It extended north to south from the present locations of the Knight



Demers Lumber was located just north of Wilder Village, on the right immediately after the sharp curve on what is now Route 5. J. Fulbert Demers built a number of homes that still grace Wilder.

Funeral Home to just past the Veremedy Pet Hospital. As an investment, he decided to erect homes on the land. After laying out Demers Avenue, he carved out 19 building sites, and then constructed conventional homes along the west side of the street and seven

Continued on page 4.



Mid-Century Jericho

By Sue Camp

Wednesday, September 13, 2017 at 7 p.m.

Sue will present a talk on twentieth century history of the Jericho District of Hartford. Enjoy a first-hand perspective on this beautiful and historic community. Greater Hartford United Church of Christ in Hartford Village. Wheelchair accessible.

Editor's Note . . .

History is Not Created in the Past

History in Hartford happened thousands of years ago, as celebrated by our Abenaki and Indigenous Peoples Day in August. History is also happening today, also celebrated at that same celebration event since our Upper Valley culture continues to be shaped by its first human residents' descendants. This point that our history is happening now was understood at the schoolchildren's visit to our HHS Museum in early summer, as reported by our Museum Curator in this issue.

Understanding our history helps put current events in context. Our article on the Demers cabins on Taft Flat illustrates the accomplishments and continuing legacy of one of Hartford's French Canadian

immigrants. The pre-WWII nickname of our high school basketball players points to another immigrant group who moved to our town and made contributions to our business and social life. What are the stories of today's immigrants in our community? Are you one of these new residents? What will be your legacy to our town's history?

Our HHS Society's best efforts to preserve our history and cultivate interest in history to our youngest residents can use our readers' help. Please consider donating to our ongoing Capital Campaign and asking those you know well to support History. It is not just something to study in school. History gives us a way to understand ourselves, build community, and put the present in context.

Gwen L. Tuson, Editor



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The Mission Statement of the Hartford Historical Society

To acquire, identify and preserve information and artifacts related to Hartford's past and communicate knowledge of local history through programs, publications, and other interaction with the community.



Hartford Historical Society

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Hartford Historical Society Newsletter

History Makes A Difference For Ottauquechee Schoolers

By Martha Knapp

Viewing the very old cash register. Listening to stories of our Abenaki people beside their artifacts. Eyes wide open during the railroad stories, especially the one about the 1887 train wreck. This year they heard the story about the Vermont State Fair. They really loved that one. And then there's the loom room, the old school desks, the huge historic bank books, the doctor's office, the antique toys, the settlers' guns and well, you get the picture.

Yes, just before school lets out for the summer, we had once again the annual visit from the Ottauquechee third and fourth graders' field trip. Their first stop is the Hartford Historical Society. There are about 40 children and their teachers and chaperones that come in and liven up the building each year. It seems crowded at first but Mary Nadeau



Hartford Historical Society Curator Martha Knapp discusses the loom with Ottauquechee Elementary School third and fourth graders during their field trip to the Garipay House in June 2017.

comes in to assist me, one of our HHS docents. We split up the groups, we each give them their tour and it works out very well.

“Oh I get it. We are all making history now so when we grow old, the things that we do with our lives become history for the future people.”

I often bring to area schools a traveling exhibit that I created, but I soon realized that if classrooms could make a visit as a class, they would see and learn so much more. One year Ottauquechee Teacher Gail Bishop made it happen. This field trip to the Hartford Historical Society museum collection works well for all of us. I received a thank-you card again this year from Mrs. Bishop and the class that said, “Again a great presentation! The students enjoyed all of it! See you next year!”

I am ready to have all of our elementary schools

enjoy the same experience. It seems that many people get interested in history when they themselves become, well, “historic” one might say. It is our dream to have people learn how fascinating our history is at a young age. Our young citizens can cultivate an interest in history for their whole lives.

The highlight of the June 2017 grade schoolers' visit came to me when I was explaining how the Hartford Historical Society belongs to them, their families, and everyone in the town of Hartford. I further mentioned that when they grow up and have children and grandchildren, the students would be able to bring their families here and show them this place. One girl had an epiphany, “Oh I get it. We are all making history now so when we grow old, the things that we do with our lives become history for the future people.”

If your child's or grandchild's classroom might like a field trip to the Hartford Historical Society Museum, then provide his or her teacher with our contact information or a copy of our newsletter with this article: 802-296-3132, <http://www.hartfordhistory.org> or info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com



Above left, J. Fulbert and Bernadette Demers on their wedding day in Canada. Top right, J. Fulbert Demers unleashed his creativity when he built this stucco home on Hartford Avenue where he and Bernadette resided for many years. Bottom right, Marie Demers Alvin occupies one of the seven log homes designed and built by her grandfather J. Fulbert Demers on Taft Flat. Construction was complete by 1950.

Residents could park their cars underneath the homes where there was also access to a pantry.

The exteriors of the approximately 1,000 square foot log homes were faced with half-sawn logs painted a rich, dark brown. Although these cabins appear similar from the outside, there are variations in the floor plans. Each has two or three bedrooms, but the basic difference would be the locations of the kitchens and porches.

Signature features of the homes include arched doorways, built-in glass fronted corner china cabinets,

“log” homes on the other. Mr. Demers completed his homebuilding project along Demers Avenue in 1950.

ironing boards that could be accessed by opening a cupboard door so that the board would drop down into place like a Murphy bed, and lovely, rustic fireplaces that were constructed with hand framing, pouring of concrete and placing of large, round stones. After curing, the fireplace fronts were hand lifted and secured in place. Residents could park their cars in the cabins’ basement underneath the homes where there was also access to a pantry.

Granddaughter Marie Demers Alvin, who lives in one of the log homes today, discovered that there is no insulation in the walls of her house, yet she describes her home as being “fairly tight.”

Originally the homes were intended as rentals, but J. Fulbert had twin sons, Fulbert W. (“Phil”) and Frederick B. When each son married, he was given a log home for a wedding gift.



Above, each Demers log home has a fireplace made of smooth stones collected from the Connecticut River. Right, the dining rooms in the Demers cabins have glass-fronted china cabinets. Five of these homes are still owned by the Demers family.

Today five of the homes are still owned by Lucille Demers and her children Bill and Marie.

J. Fulbert also fancied cement blocks as a building material. He went on to design and build block homes at 32 Demers Avenue and 829 Hartford Avenue, the latter where he and his wife resided for many years (the present Veremedy building).

For a time after selling the sawmill property, they lived in one of the log homes before building this permanent residence. During the planning process, Mr. Demers unleashed his creative imagination. For his wife's convenience, he installed a corner closet with a U-shaped rod mounted inside the door for hanging clothing, enabling her immediate visual access to the closet's entire contents.

Other features included an elevator (just because he could reported his granddaughter; nobody in the family was handicapped), a heating system that provided warmth through the floors, milk and mail boxes that could be accessed from either the inside or the outside of the house and his signature arched doorways.

The outside was finished in stucco, a material not commonly seen in this area during that time. (In the late 1980s, Veremedy Pet Hospital enlarged the structure, building around the original block house.)

Always one to think "outside the box," he came up with some interesting inventions, such as an automatic electric page turner for the disabled that could be

activated by a toe, knee or knuckle and a unique adjustable lap tray that could be adjusted for high or low beds or for use from a wheelchair. The lap tray still exists.

After a lengthy and productive life, J. Fulbert passed away in 1967 and Bernadette in 1975. Both are buried nearby in the Mt. Olivet Catholic cemetery on Hartford Avenue.

Meanwhile, just down Demers Avenue from the line of log homes, son Phil designed his own home at 1 Demers Avenue in 1963. He, too, has since passed away, but his wife Lucille still lives there. Some of that home's interesting features include the aluminum siding original to the structure and the unusual enameled metal wall paneling in the kitchen.

Phil was a familiar face at Dulac's Building Supply in Lebanon for 26 years before becoming a manager at Johnson's Home Center in West Lebanon for an additional 20 years. He is remembered by many for his expertise in building and for high-quality customer service. Many looked to him for advice when tackling a home project.

A few years ago, Marie stopped at the former site of Demers Lumber and mentioned her family history to the present owners. They took her into the old mill and gave her one of her grandfather's old business signs, complete with a phone number (124-J). She has it hanging in her home as a reminder of his lasting Hartford legacy.

Abenaki and Indigenous Peoples Honoring Day Celebrates Hartford's Earliest Inhabitants

By Martha Knapp

Once again many Native and non-Native families gathered together on Saturday, August 12, 2017 to celebrate and honor the Abenaki and Indigenous Peoples language, culture, traditions, and history in our town and region at the site of the old Wôbitekwa Odanak/White River village grounds at Lyman Point Park. People in attendance came from Hartford, the Upper Valley, the wider region, Canada, and the United States. Our 2017 event occurred after a year's hiatus for this annual summer gathering.

Saturday morning Martha Knapp, Art Nadeau, and other volunteers prepared for the gathering. The Hartford Rec Department trailer was there as well with popup tents, tables, a sound system, and other crucial equipment that makes this day possible.

Nate Pero, Chief of the Koasek Traditional Band, and the gathering wild game chef, arrived with his large cooker which he fired up for the traditional corn roast we all love.

Master Basket Maker, Abenaki historian and teacher Jeanne Brink once again brought her exquisite fancy sweet grass and ash baskets.

Nate Pero, Brian Pero, Pat Leno, Art Hanchett and others cooked the corn, stew, and wild meat for the gathering this year. Abenaki elders and families from all over the homeland and Native people and families from Mohican, Kanienkehaga (Mohawk), Cherokee, Mi'maq, Cree, and many other homelands traveled to join us this year.

Master Basket Maker, Abenaki historian and teacher Jeanne Brink once again brought her exquisite fancy sweet grass and ash baskets. She was joined this year by her husband Doug Brink, her grandson Colby



Clockwise from top left: Attendees enjoy fellowship at the potluck meal with roasted game meat, roasted corn, and corn-squash pudding along with many donated dishes. Jesse Larocque and Mike Boles prepare splints from an ash log for basket makers! Emily Boles makes a traditional Abenaki basket from black ash. Emily learned this craft from her family members. Some of the many Abenaki crafts on display. Michael Descouteux of Concord, VT, Skip Cady, Tom Beck of Cabot, and Brian Blanchette play an Abenaki song on the drum.



Thompson, and her cousin Kerry Wood with Kerry's son Aaron making baskets. Valerie, Emily, and Mike Boles from Sharon once again honored us with their fancy sweet grass and ash and ash splint baskets, basket making lessons, and ash log pounding and splint making ways.

Mike Boles joined Jesse Larocque on stage to share the ash log pounding and splint splitting, shaving, and preparation to the exacting standards of the basket makers! Jesse and Mike narrated the many threads of ash pounding, and splint shaping at the heart of the basket making tradition in Abenaki life. Jeanne Brink joined Kerry and Aaron Wood, Donna and John Moody on stage to talk about the Obomsawin family tradition of basket making in Vermont and Canada.

We were deeply honored once again that Master Bead worker Rhonda Besaw of the Abenaki Nation of New Hampshire also joined us for a day of sharing and teaching. Rhonda shared her lovely, internationally celebrated bead work and traditional clothing craft. Melody Nunn and Michael Descouteux helped Rhonda to setup, and Melody

took lots of pictures of the day.

Bryan Blanchette, Tom Beck, Michael Descouteux, and Skip Cady shared Abenaki songs of honoring and celebration on the drum. Donna and John Moody of Winter Center once again were the masters of ceremony and shared their vignettes of local and regional Native history in many time periods. Displays were shared by The Main St. Museum and the Hartford Historical Society for all attendees to view and enjoy.

After an opening song from Bryan Blanchette, everyone joined in the feast of wild meat, corn, and a wide variety of donated dishes and food gifts. At the end of the day, our volunteers and core crew joined together to clean up.

We are very grateful for all of the help given by so many to make this gathering possible. The organizations sponsoring the annual event include: Dorothy Byrne Foundation, Hartford Historical Society, Hartford Parks & Recreation, Vermont Fish & Wildlife, and the Winter Center for Indigenous Traditions. Thank you all!

Memories of Log Drives on the White River

By Helen Aher

Reprinted from the *Hartford Village Voice*, Spring 1995

When I view the White River today, it is with a feeling of tranquility – not exactly as I viewed it at age 12 when I witnessed some of the final log drives to come down the river. My father’s farm, where I grew up, was about two miles north of Hartford Village beside a narrow dirt road known today as Route 14. Our house is still there and is now the residence of Dot Jones (*Editor’s note: Dot Jones, who served as president of the Hartford Historical Society for many years, passed away in December 2010.*) From this vantage point, I had a “front row seat” to all the commotion the log drives usually brought.

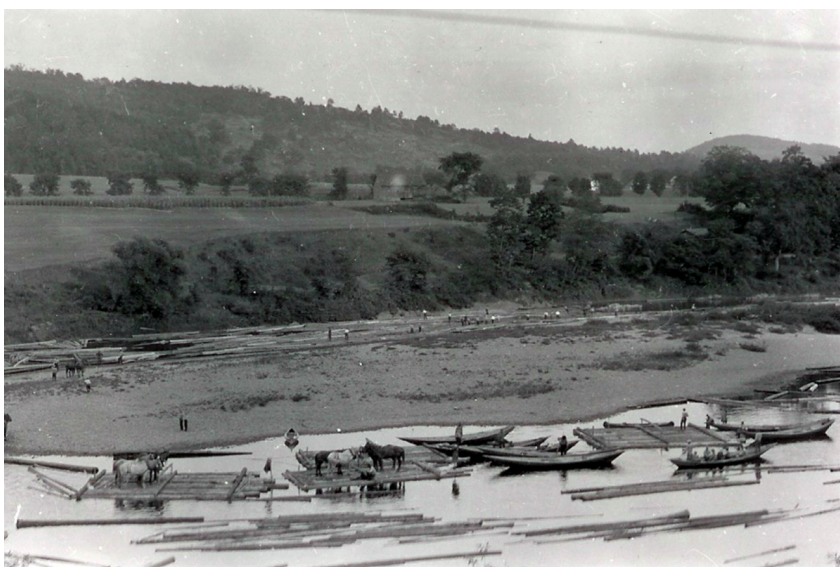
Each winter, logs would be cut from the forests bordering the upper reaches of the river and piled near the river to await the high waters of spring to float them to the mills well down stream.

With the logs came anywhere from 60 to 200 “rough and ready” men with their horses and equipment to prod the wood on its way.

We had a very large yellow barn on our farm and each year the log drivers would stable some of their horses in it for several weeks at a time. Very often, logs would wash up onto the banks and become stranded. These horses were used primarily to pull the logs back into the water.

Across the road from our barn was a large field where the log drivers camped. It became quite an impressive “tent city.” The field was level and convenient to a large, fresh water tub beside the road which they often shared with peddlers, hobos and Gypsies. I was afraid of the Gypsies; afraid they would carry me off. For that matter, I stayed clear of the hobos as well. Occasionally my older brothers would feel brave and sneak in closely to try to find where the hobos had hidden their whiskey bottles.

I remember my father taking us kids down to the field where the loggers camped. One of my fondest memories was to smell their “bean hole” beans. MMMMM – were they delicious with their sweet molasses flavor! At the same time, we’d look forward to a very special treat, a sugar cookie almost the size



Log drives on the White River brought hundreds of “rough and ready” men with horses and equipment to Hartford. The drives were eventually replaced by railroads and trucks.

of a plate. The men were always kind to us, but I was glad that my father was close by.

The log drives were always a special event and quite often drew large crowds to watch the crews as they jumped from log to log, separating them with their long pikes. When the logs reached the backwater behind the Hartford dam, a large “boom” guided them to a sluice-way at the west end of the dam. This was done to prevent the logs from damaging the dam as well as protecting the chair factory located on the east side.

The log drives discontinued before I left home, probably because the railroads and trucks became the more efficient and less expensive method of transporting logs.

Editor’s note: Helen Aher lived in Hartford all of her life. She was a teacher in local schools for 27 years, a member of the Hartford Women’s Club and the Hartford Historical Society and was a communicant of St. Anthony Church in White River Junction. Helen passed away on April 12, 1995. The Hartford Historical Society is grateful that she added so much written information about our community, and her name was added to the Society’s Honor Roll in 2014.

Community & Cooperation Exemplified By Mid-Century Jericho History Talk, September 13

Sue Camp will present a talk entitled “Mid-Century Jericho” at our next regularly scheduled program to be held on Wednesday, September 13 about the Jericho District of the Town of Hartford. She will describe the importance of the mid-twentieth century Jericho District families’ strong sense of community spirit and how these families cooperated with farm projects. Among her topics will be: the True Benefits of the Home Dem Club, the 10-Cent Christmas Party and the Jericho Community Club. Sue will follow up with a Q&A, and she encourages audience participation. Sue is from Hartford and grew up in the Jericho District.

The program will be held at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ in Hartford Village, beginning at 7 p.m. The building is handicapped accessible. Hartford Historical Society Members who would like to volunteer to help with refreshments, please contact HHS at 802-296-3132 or info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com. To familiarize (or re-familiarize) yourself with the Jericho District before Sue’s presentation, you can review the Jericho Rural Historic District. Many buildings in this community are listed on the National Historic Register. Visit <http://www.hartford-vt.org/DocumentCenter/View/270> for in-depth reading and an armchair tour. For a basic description visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jericho_Rural_Historic_District. Enjoy the history!



This woodworking shop is one of many quaint, historic buildings in the Jericho District.

Hartford’s Flying Fascists

The Hartford High School basketball team was known for a time in the early 20th century as The Flying Fascists due to the speed and skill of the Italian-American players. Even though smaller in stature than many of their classmates, these star athletes were known as a force to be reckoned with when other teams met them on the court. Some of the team’s stars included members of the Regione, DePalo and Falzarano families. The Flying Fascists name was dropped when Benito Mussolini (1889-1945) introduced his harsh, dictatorial governing style.

Italian Americans moved to the Town of Hartford, particularly White River Junction, and built a number of businesses that built on the economic prosperity the town gained from proximity to a main railroad line. Some of the children of these families earned a positive reputation in our town sports team and went on to pursue college educations and professional careers such as a lawyer educated at Harvard who returned to practice in Hartford.

The National Fascist Party in post-WWI Italy had its

roots as early as 1919. In 1921 Mussolini won his first election to the Italian Chamber of Deputies. After the Fascist March on Rome, Mussolini was handed power in Italy on October 26, 1922. He turned to military-style power as a dictator by dismantling Italy’s constitutional government between 1925 and 1927. He ruled using his personality as propaganda and, at times, hid any truth of political loss or any failures such as economic declines in Italy. Fascists were viewed as strong and powerful. However, Mussolini carried out criminal acts against the Italian citizenry such as torture and civilians held hostage carried out by his appointee Cesare Mori. His use of chemical warfare and wholesale slaughter of civilians in his offensive action against Ethiopia in 1935-1936 turned international opinion solidly against the Italian Leader as well as against Fascism. The League of Nations posed economic sanctions on Italy following Mussolini’s victory over Ethiopia. Mussolini soon allied Italy with Hitler as world politics crumbled into the start of WWII.



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THANK YOU!

June Program Delights Audiences

By Mary Nadeau

Vermont State Senator Dick McCormack presented his program of Vermont Folk Songs to a large and appreciative audience on June 14 at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ.

Drawing on both his teaching and performing experience, Dick combined music with historical lecture to bring us on a journey from the 1704 Deerfield Massacre through Vermont's Hippy Movement of the 1960s and beyond. Some of the songs were period pieces while others were his own original works. Among the favorites were humorous ones that included "The Women's Suffrage Song," and "The Year the Hippies Came."

Dick encouraged us to participate in singing some of the choruses and the audience joined in with joyful enthusiasm!

Dick McCormack's musical program was an excellent "refresher course" in Vermont history with some little-known facts thrown in for good measure.



Historical Society News

Capital Campaign Update from Judy Barwood

We are still in the negotiation stage with Richard Daniels pertaining to the acquisition of the Elks Club property and expect a definite decision very soon. We are hopeful that he will accept our counter-offer (our original offer not being accepted) at which time we will continue actively soliciting funds. The committee feels that this property and the historic house are ideal for our purposes and will continue to pursue this endeavor. The membership will be notified when a definite decision is made. We would love to say a big "Thank You!" to all of our supporters on our mailing list for your donations and continued interest in this project. We truly felt all of the love and support from our membership.

Annual HHS Yard Sale Report

The Hartford Historical Society thanks all who participated this past July to make our Annual Yard Sale a successful fundraiser for our non-profit organization. On July 8 and 9, 2017 we raised \$2,407 from our sales of the donated yard sale items. These funds will be used to help pay for the heating costs at the Hartford Historical Society. As a Society we particularly appreciate all the donors and shoppers who helped make our yard sale a success. We also want to specifically recognize individuals whose efforts included many hours and without whom the 2017 Annual Yard Sale would not have been possible. They include: Mona Becker, Dan George, Ron Locke, and all Board and family members who assisted with set-up and clean-up! Thank you to all again!

Rest Stop Fundraiser Help Wanted

Make homemade treats and snacks for Rest Stop Fundraiser. HHS is staffing the Sharon I-89 rest stop the Wednesday before Thanksgiving on November 22. Travelers give donations. We need your help to make this fundraiser successful! We are looking for home baked goods, also apples, bananas, or oranges to give to the people traveling. Call for more information at 802/296-3132. Thanks!

Hartford Historical Society

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HHS Calendar

OPEN HOUSE at the Garipay House

Until further notice, the Garipay House Museum is open to the public Monday through Friday each week from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. or by appointment. To be sure that we are open, look for the flag outside the building or contact us at 802 296-3132. For an appointment, contact Pat Stark at 295-3077 M-F from 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

MONTHLY MEETINGS open to the public

Fourth Thursday of the month – **HHS Board of Directors meeting** at the Garipay House, 6:30 p.m. (Please check for exact date). For more information, call Pat Stark at 295-3077.

PROGRAMS

Wednesday, September 13, 2017 – “Mid-Century Jericho” presented by Sue Camp, 7 p.m. at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, 1721 Maple Street, Hartford Village. Refreshments.

Wednesday, November 8, 2017 – “Vermont’s Poor Houses” presented by Stephen Taylor, 7 p.m. at the Greater Hartford United Church of Christ, 1721 Maple Street, Hartford Village. Refreshments.

Wednesday, November 22, 2017 - **Sharon Rest Stop Fundraiser**, Homemade baked goods, fruit salad, and other treats provided to I-89 travelers by HHS. Volunteers needed to bake and supply treats. For more information please call 802-296-3132 or email info@hartfordhistoricalsociety.com.

Saturday, December 2, 2017 – **Traditional Christmas Party at the Garipay House, Hartford Library, and Greater Hartford United Church of Christ in Hartford Village.** All three locations will be part of the event.

1 p.m. to 6 p.m..

The **Genealogy Center** in the Hartford Library is open Tuesday afternoons from 1-3 p.m.. Carole Haehnel will be happy to assist you in exploring the resources we have and in accessing information from The Landmark, which we have on microfiche. Ray Fifield can assist researchers. Just call the library to set it up.