Events and Education at President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site

Volunteers Make a Difference!

History has come alive at President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site this past season. Students, teachers, and parents traveled from Vermont schools near and far to participate in history labs. Our wonderful cadre of volunteer docents walked the students through the village of Plymouth telling the Coolidge story and participating in an educational scavenger hunt. Students as young as third grade learned to make cheese at the Plymouth Cheese Factory and helped shear sheep guided by Fred DePaul, a farmer for the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.

Re-enactors brought history to life this season with their vivid portrayals of important figures in history, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and our sixth U.S. President John Quincy Adams. Families crowded into the Union Christian Church, owned by the Coolidge Foundation, to see and hear from these excellent actors. Both performances were supported with Vermont Humanities Council grants.

North Hero students shear sheep with Fred DePaul

Jim Cooke as President John Quincy Adams Greets Cyndy Bittinger, Coolidge Foundation Director On Plymouth Old Home Day, August 5th

Professor Joseph Ellis spoke extemporaneously about the founding fathers of America and how they might view some of the events of today’s world. His most recent book is His Excellency: George Washington and Ellis is the author of other historical bestsellers. In 2001 he received the Pulitzer Prize in History for Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation. He donated his regular fee for his talk to the Coolidge Foundation.

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Calvin Coolidge and Judson Welliver

The name of Judson Welliver has been raised from obscurity through the diligent efforts of William Safire, a speechwriter for former President, Richard Nixon, who now writes the “On Language” column for the New York Times Magazine. Safire has formed the “Judson Welliver Society, open to former presidential speechwriters and chose to name this group after Welliver, since Judson seems to be the first person hired to write speeches for the President of the United States. Welliver had joined Warren Harding’s campaign for the presidency and stayed on not only to write speeches for the new president, but also to work as a Congressional liaison to the White House. After Harding’s death, Welliver continued to work for two more years under Coolidge, a President who was known to write his own speeches. So the questions arise, who was Judson Welliver and what did he do in Calvin Coolidge’s White House?

Judson Churchill Welliver was born in Aledo, Mercer County, Illinois in April 1870 and died in Pennsylvania in April 1943. He attended Cornell College in Iowa, but never graduated, and began his journalism career at the Sioux City, Iowa Journal. Subsequently, he had many assignments on other newspapers and periodicals. He has been variously identified as muckraking journalist, seasoned reporter, writer on reform topics, Washington, London, or WWI correspondent, and political stringer. He was also a gentleman farmer, dairy farmer, lobbyist, biographer, etymologist, community activist, publicist, public speaker, and inveterate author of letters to the editor. He wrote articles for L’Écho de Paris Journal Littéraire, American Review of Reviews, The Literary Supplement, Century Magazine, New York Tribune, New York Sun, New York Herald, Christian Science Monitor, Los Angeles Times, as well as the Washington Times and Herald before they merged. In his thirties, he entered the national political scene and, enjoying the confidence of President Theodore Roosevelt, “wrote many intimate stories dealing with that picturesque executive.”

Some light is shed on Welliver’s activity in the White House in the memoir Washington Tapestry written by Olive Ewing Clapper, widow of newspaper reporter and radio commentator Raymond Clapper, published in 1946. She refers to “Judd” Welliver as the “witty and puckish speechwriter for the candidate,” meaning Warren Harding. Another observer, Irwin Hood (Ike) Hoover’s posthumous Forty-Two Years in the White House recounted his service as Chief Usher. “Ike” Hoover referred to Welliver as “appointed to prepare whatever set and formal speeches he [Harding] was called upon to make” and “when Coolidge came, he found Welliver on the job and continued to employ him, no doubt finding him a very handy man.”

The May 15, 1922 Christian Science Monitor describes Welliver as “the man who is popularly regarded as the Administration liaison officer” to the U.S. Senate and as the “emissary” and “attaché of the Harding official household dating from campaign days in Marion.” In addition, the article relates “It is understood that Mr. Welliver’s principal duty at the White House is to keep the President in intimate, intelligent touch with the great currents of public opinion as they manifest themselves through the newspapers of the land and the executive mail bag.” Welliver accompanied President Harding on the ill-fated trip to Alaska, Seattle, and San Francisco, during which newspaper accounts characterized him as a White House “stenographer,” along with J.W. Murphy and M.J. McDermott.

As President Coolidge assumed office, Welliver “took general charge of the correspondence which dealt purely with administration policies…and at times the number of letters passing through his hands was in the thousands.” His position title is variously listed as “confidential assistant at the executive offices,” “confidential secretary,” “executive clerk,” “chief clerk,” and service in a “confidential post.” President Coolidge indicated that Judson Welliver was “especially helpful in getting information from the different departments on any question that I have under consideration.” On his side, Welliver characterized Coolidge “as a wonderful detail man if you can get the details small enough.”

Welliver was a frequent contributor, both while a White House staff member and afterwards, to The American Review of Reviews. The editor of this influential, monthly periodical, described Welliver as “one of the foremost journalists of America” with “wide experience as an investigator and writer on economic and political subjects”. Welliver’s in-depth, topical articles included extensive profiles of Presidents Harding and Coolidge. Examining Calvin Coolidge in July 1924, a year after the death of Harding, Welliver concluded “Mr. Coolidge has been content to let his acts speak for him: and these acts have impressed the public as representing the very continued on page 6
Letter from the Executive Director — Cyndy Bittinger

I have just been reappointed to the Presidential Sites and Libraries Committee of the American Association for State and Local History. Terry Davis, President of AASLH, praised my “outstanding job” on this committee which organized an important meeting for professionals at Hyde Park, New York this past June. First Lady Laura Bush wrote us that she and the president “are grateful for the diligence and care” that we exercise in our trusted positions. The conference focused on “best practices” in the field of presidential properties. Bill Jenney, Site Administer, and I presented “Constitution Day” as an educational outreach program.

One of our important roles is to reprint and republish materials that will inspire the public to appreciate and study the legacy of Calvin Coolidge. Since Calvin Coolidge’s messages and books are out of print, the Coolidge Foundation is pleased when we find an opportunity to republish them. Recently the National Notary Association republished The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge. We are so pleased that this book is now available for wider distribution. Please request that libraries and bookstores in your communities order this Coolidge book. It is considered one of the best presidential stories, is well written, and evokes an era cherished by those of us who spend time in Vermont.

At this time of year, we think of the holidays and gifts. I encourage you to give a book from our bookstore (online at www.calvin-coolidge.com) or give a donation to the Coolidge Foundation in honor of someone you know. We will acknowledge it promptly and thank you for making a difference in our cause, to educate people of all ages about the Coolidge history in order to understand our nation’s history and to forge a stronger society for the future.

Executive Director and Author Cyndy Bittinger continues to give book talks on Grace Coolidge, Sudden Star. In November she will be speaking at the National First Ladies Library in Canton, Ohio as a special speaker in conjunction with their new exhibit entitled “Making the Grade: First Ladies and Education.” Next year she is already scheduled to give talks for the Eastman Ladies in Grantham, N.H., for Osher Lifelong Learning Institute in Springfield, VT, and for the International Club of Hanover, NH.

New Trustees at Annual Meeting in August of 2006

At the Annual Meeting of the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation on August 6, 2006, trustees were elected at President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site in Plymouth, Vermont. The new trustees serve three year terms and they are: Daniel W. Churchill of Cavendish, Arthur E. Crowley, Jr. of Rutland, Edward Janeway of Norwich, Andrew T. Kostanecki of Bridgewater, and Gerard E. Jones of Woodstock.

Returning trustees are: Brian T. Allen of Andover, MA; Mimi Baird of Woodstock, VT; Charles C. Buell of Norwich, VT; State Senator John F. Campbell of Quechee, VT; Howard Coffin of Montpelier, VT; David Collins of Woodstock, VT; Barbara Eakle of Woodstock, VT; Katharine Feichtinger of Plainfield, NH; Dulany Gibson of Woodstock, VT; Jennifer Sayles Harville of Ellicott City, MD; Betty Masterson of Ludlow, VT; Darrah Moore of Ludlow, VT; Thomas Murray of Branford, CT, Richard B. North of Ludlow, VT; Timothy Reilly of Bridgewater Corners, VT; David Roberts of Woodstock, VT; Ann Seibert of Norwich, VT; Rep. Ernest Shand, Jr. of Windsor, VT; Nancy Tanzer of Ludlow, VT; and Jeffrey N. Wennberg of Rutland, VT.

Sue Pollender of Ludlow and Jim Cooke of Boston, MA were recognized for their accomplishments. Pollender was commended for her devotion to teaching and helping the Education Committee with its many projects: an improved web site, in-depth history labs, Constitution Day, and a Teachers’ Institute. Jim Cooke was commended for his masterful index and thoughtful introduction in the republished Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge.
Triada Music Festival brought students from age eight to fourteen to Okemo to play violins, violas, and cellos. The faculty is drawn from the best of the symphonies and musical institutes. On July 4th, their classical music concert took advantage of the perfect acoustics of the church at the historic site.

Plymouth Cheese and Harvest Festival was selected by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce as one of the state’s Top Ten Fall Events for 2006 and it was fun with wagon rides, historic farm and craft demonstrations, and old time fiddling. Coolidge Foundation trustees Nancy Tanzer, Barbara Eakle and Katharine Feichtinger became actresses for the afternoon and brought to life Aurora Pierce, Midge Aldrich, and Carrie Brown Coolidge, all women who knew Calvin and Grace Coolidge.

Also on that day, Plymouth Elementary School students learned butter churning and cheese making from Nancy Tanzer, Coolidge Foundation trustee, and then set up work stations to teach young visitors what they had learned.

Constitution Day was held on September 14th with middle school students from Ludlow and 6th graders from Cavendish. Students learned how a bill becomes a law after viewing a video of U.S. Senator Jim Jeffords in action and then worked on their own legislation concerning immigration. They learned about the legislative branch this year and plan on studying the presidency next year. This educational outreach was developed to respond to the recently passed federal legislation requiring all schools to hold programs in September on the Constitution.

Funding for events, of course, is enhanced by donations from Coolidge Foundation members and friends and also, in 2006, by the financial underwriting of the following: BlueCross BlueShield of Vermont, Chippers, First Community Bank, Gerrish Honda, Hawk Inn & Mountain Resort, Vermont Country Store, Vermont Mutual Group, and Williamson Group & Sotheby’s International Realty.

—Cyndy Bittinger
Executive Director
Pi Beta Phi Foundation Grants Coolidge Foundation $3500 for Grace Coolidge Archive

Andrea Shultz, Executive Director of the Pi Beta Phi Foundation based in Town and Country, Missouri, recently notified the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation of a grant for $3,500 to develop a Grace Coolidge archive of memorabilia.

Grace was a charter member of the Vermont Beta Chapter and delighted in the activities of the group. In 1901 she was her chapter’s delegate to their national convention and then continued to attend meetings. In 1912, she was selected as a Vice President for the Eastern area known as the Alpha Province. In 1915, she began sending Round Robin letters to a group of Pi Beta Phi sisters and those letters have been essential in researching the legacy of this First Lady who served from 1923 to 1929 in the White House. More letters were written until Mrs. Coolidge died in 1957.

Barbara Eakle, a Coolidge Foundation Trustee and a member of Pi Beta Phi, is an advocate for more attention to the legacy of Grace Anna Goodhue Coolidge. She contacted the national fraternity to see if a grant could be obtained. The Pi Beta Phi Fraternity for Women has as its mission to promote friendship, develop women of intellect and integrity, cultivate leadership potential and enrich lives through community service. Pi Beta Phi and the Coolidge Foundation have found a common interest in researching and preserving the history of Grace Coolidge. Cyndy Bittinger, Executive Director of the Coolidge Foundation, traveled to the Pi Beta Phi archives to document materials for her book on Grace Coolidge.

Plymouth Notch, Vermont

Saturday, December 9
10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Selected as a 2005/6 “Top 10 Winter Event” by the Vermont Chamber of Commerce!

Free Admission To The Coolidge Birthplace And Union Christian Church, Both Decorated For The Holiday Season.

Winter Exhibits at the ALDRICH HOUSE, COOLIDGE HALL, and PLYMOUTH CHEESE FACTORY.

Holiday shopping at the FLORENCE CILLEY STORE & CHEESE FACTORY SHOP.

Fiddler Adam Boyce, “homemade & hearty” lunch at the Wilder House Restaurant, traditional craft demonstrations, special cancellation at the historic Plymouth Post Office, children’s holiday activities, and sleigh or wagon rides (depending on weather) with Fred DePaul

For further information, call the President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site, (802) 672-3773.
Addressing the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington, D.C. on January 17, 1925, President Calvin Coolidge poetically outlined what wealth should reward:

Wealth is the product of industry, ambition, character and untiring effort. In all experience, the accumulation of wealth means the multiplication of schools, the increase of knowledge, the dissemination of intelligence, the encouragement of science, the broadening of outlook, the expansion of liberty, the widening of culture.

Contributions from your resources, no matter the size, to the Coolidge Foundation support the study of history and government in our schools, increase the knowledge of students of all ages, broaden their outlooks, widen their cultural awareness, and expand their understanding of our cherished liberties.

Last year’s donations supported youth musical string performances, the study of the U.S. Constitution and the legislature, the appearance of Eleanor Roosevelt and John Quincy Adams re-enactors, classes in the presidency, sustainability in Vermont hilltop hamlets, civic discourse, and historic preservation, as well as the republication of the Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge. At the time of its initial 1929 printing, Coolidge hoped his autobiography “would be useful for those in public life, in educational work, in preparation for citizenship, and would be especially a book that parents would wish their children to read.” A March 1930 New York Times editorial characterized the president as “The Poet Coolidge.”

His words are poetic; his message is clear. We invite you to share your wealth in support of history education by contributing to the foundation’s annual appeal. Your financial donation will support programs of study that will help overcome what historian David McCullough labels “an epidemic of historical illiteracy.” Please join our crusade. We thank you.

—William F. Brooks, Jr. Development Director
Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation
Who We Are and What We Do

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Governor Jim Douglas visits President Calvin Coolidge State Historic Site on Columbus Day, pictured left to right: Site Administrator Bill Jenney, President of Coolidge Foundation Betty Masterson, Governor Douglas, Trustee Mimi Baird, Executive Director Cyndy Bittinger, Trustee Tom Murray, Trustee and State Rep. Ernie Shand, and Linda Murray.

Vision Statement
The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation seeks to inspire the public to appreciate and study the legacy of President Coolidge—his personal life, values, and ideals, and his public career—in order to understand our nation’s history and to forge a stronger society for the future.

Mission Statement
The Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation, Inc., an educational nonprofit 501 (C) 3 organization, utilizes its resources (the Union Christian Church in Plymouth, Vermont, collections, and archives) along with an ongoing historical publication and research program as catalysts to collect, preserve, and interpret the life, career, and legacy of President Calvin Coolidge for the benefit of the public.

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“We all live in the same world. We are bound to a common destiny through a common brotherhood.”

Calvin Coolidge
The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge

Newly Republished!

This new version has an index and more photographs.

It is a wonderful holiday present at $22 plus shipping and handling.