

Coolidge Club Blast #2

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Judge Franklin Billings, Jr.

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Why doesn't Coolidge have a big national library like, say, President Bush, President Clinton, President Carter or President Truman? One reason Coolidge doesn't have such a library is that the presidential library laws were different in his time. Another reason though was that Coolidge resisted large monuments. He simply didn't believe in the "great man" theory of history. In fact, in his *Autobiography*, Coolidge wrote: "It is a great advantage to a President, and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know that he is not a great man."

In Coolidge's time retiring presidents did have access to resources. Friends of the executive would get together and raise funds -- Franklin Roosevelt did this for President Wilson, for example. Coolidge's friend Clarence Barron of the *Wall Street Journal* pulled together a group to raise funds for Coolidge. Andrew Mellon, the Treasury Secretary, the Pratts, who had attended Amherst, also contributed. In the end the sum raised for Coolidge rose to \$2 million.

But Coolidge didn't use the money for his own legacy. He gave the money to his wife's charity, the Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Ma. It was John Coolidge, the president's son, Grace, the state of Vermont, a number of insurance companies and many individuals who stepped forward to preserve Plymouth Notch and establish the Coolidge Foundation after the president's death.

Among the many important people involved was Judge Franklin Billings, pictured above. Judge Billings passed away early in March, and was an original trustee of the Foundation.

Another leader was George Amidon, the father of Thomas Amidon of Stowe, who is newly active in our debate program. The Rockefeller family was also important. When contractor Ken Manner was in this week to ensure that the pipes at our Union Christian Church didn't burst in the cold, Ken reminded us that Laurance and Mary Rockefeller paid for the burial of all the power wires in Plymouth Notch a few decades ago. That gift ensured that Plymouth looks "oldy timey," not anachronistic. Neighbor James Ottaway, Jr. and his wife Mary made yet another move to preserve the site: they arranged conservation easements so that the view at Plymouth Notch would remain green and rural. You will soon be able to view the hillside at Plymouth Notch via the Foundation's new webcam.

Many others have played key roles over the years in preserving the legacy of President Coolidge. Share your stories with us by replying to this email.





Coolidge Foundation Updates

Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin will join us **April 8** to headline the kickoff event of our 2014 speakers series. The event, “**What Ails Vermont – Is there a Cure to the Drug Epidemic?**” is in partnership with **Norwich University** and will take place from 4:00-6:00 p.m. at Norwich’s **Plumley Armory**. A panel discussion will follow Gov. Shumlin’s remarks. Coolidge Foundation trustee **Sarwar Kashmeri** will moderate and panelists include: **Dr. Henry Chen**, health commissioner for the state of Vermont; **COL Tom L’Esperance**, director of the Vermont State Police and other faculty experts from Norwich University.

This week trustee **Boyden Gray** made a major gift of \$50,000 to support our **presidential high school economic debate program**. This comes on top of the recent major gift from the trust of Donald and Prudence Webb, stewarded by Thomas J. Amidon, for our debate program. We will be working with the [Debate Institutes of Dartmouth](#), the famous debate summer camp, which will bring students to Plymouth Notch this summer. These recent gifts will help provide scholarships for students, especially Vermont students, to attend the Debate Institutes at Dartmouth. [Apply here](#) today.

We need your help this summer! We have a very full calendar of events for summer 2014, and there are many opportunities for Coolidge Club members to get involved. Please join us **July 4 to read from the *Autobiography***. Please also come to the Notch on **July 8, July 10, and August 1 to judge our high school debaters**. Also join us **August 2** to celebrate the inauguration of President Coolidge with the Foundation’s annual meeting, a reenactment of the 1923 inauguration, and a presentation by author Reeve Lindbergh.

Here’s a comprehensive list of date reminders for your calendar:

- **April 5: Vermont History Day**, our education director **Diane Kemble** along with Matt Denhart will judge at **Vermont History Day** in Barre, Vt. Thanks to donor Mimi Baird, the Coolidge Foundation will present a scholarship to a deserving young Vermonter.

- **April 8: Gov. Peter Shumlin** kicks off our 2014 speaker series with the event “What Ails Vermont – Is there a Cure to the Drug Epidemic?” from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at Norwich University’s Plumley Armory.
- **April 12: Family Day at Plymouth Notch** from noon to 4:00 p.m. with a presentation of presidential hats at 2:00 p.m. by education director Diane Kemble. Special thanks to **Bill Jenney** and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation.
- **May 5:** Come celebrate the **U.S. Mint's** release of the **Coolidge Presidential Dollar Coin** with a special event at the **Union League Club in New York City**. Our speaker for the evening will be **James Grant**, the author, publisher and monetary policy expert.
- **June 21-22: Vermont History Expo** – This year’s expo takes place at the **Tunbridge (Vt) Fairgrounds**. Come see the Coolidge Foundation’s exhibit, prepared by Diane Kemble.
- **July 4: Celebration at Plymouth Notch.** Join us for the traditional march to the cemetery, readings and wreath-laying at the gravesite, and a group reading of the Coolidge *Autobiography* in the Union Christian Church. To sign up to read from the *Autobiography*, respond to this email.
- **July 8: Presidential high school economic debate at Plymouth Notch.** To judge, reply to this email.
- **July 10: Presidential high school economic debate at Plymouth Notch.** To judge, reply to this email.
- **August 1: Presidential high school economic debate at Plymouth Notch.** To judge, reply to this email.
- **August 1: Annual “Under the Tent” Summer Gala at Plymouth Notch.**
- **August 2:** Coolidge Foundation’s **Annual Meeting** and Plymouth Old Home Day with speaker **Reeve Lindbergh**. We will also hold a **reenactment** of Coolidge’s 1923 inauguration as President.

Last week, Jerry Wallace, a national advisory board member, spoke on Coolidge to the Wichita Pachyderm Club. Wallace's speech was well received, and is available on [Youtube at this link](#).

In case you missed it, last week Amity Shlaes interviewed Hoover Scholar George Nash for C-SPAN's "Book TV." The interview can be viewed [at this link](#).

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