

Royalston Historical Society

February 2026 Royalston Community Newsletter article

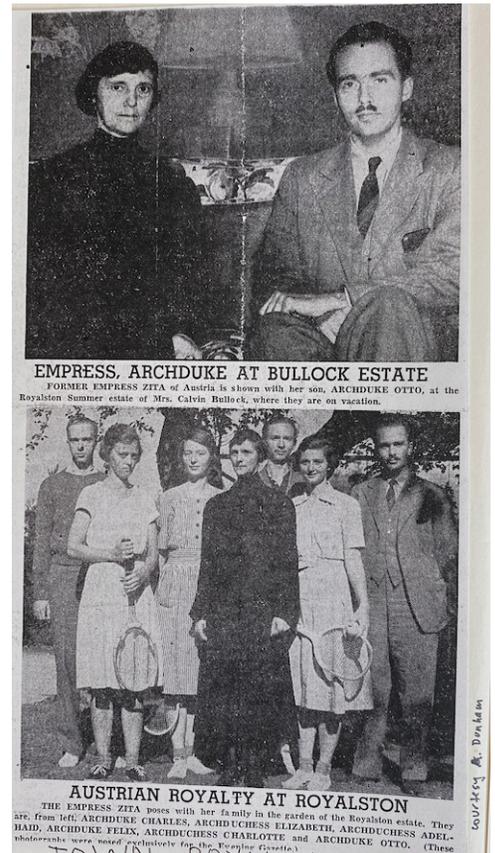
Lots is happening at the Museum. The downstairs has been painted and members are getting excited about telling stories of Royalston's industries and natural history in downstairs displays. If you have relevant artifacts to share or would like to help with the research or new curation, please reach out.

The RHS is saddened by the **passing of Ginny Moore**. Living in Royalston for over 90 years, she lived a lot of Town history. A few years ago, she told of a snowy February when she was in elementary school at Whitney Hall. It was Valentines Day and she had forgotten her valentines at home on Harrington Farm, (which was located where the house was knocked down recently between the greenhouses and Village School on Rt. 68). During school lunch, she left school and walked home for her valentines, a long cold walk for an elementary-schooler. When she arrived home, she found the stove was spouting high angry flames. She was able to get adult help and the farm was spared. She marveled that if she hadn't forgotten the cards, she could have lost her home.

Empress Zita's jewels recently "found". Many know that Empress Zita, the last empress of the Austria-Hungarian Empire summered with seven of her eight children from 1940-1944 on Royalston Common as a guest of the Bullocks, a family with deep Royalston roots who in the early 20th century became nationally prominent because of their investing and banking based in New York.

After WWI, in the crumbling of their empire, the Empress and her husband Emperor Charles, (who was Arch-duke Ferdinand's nephew) left Austria and lived as the guests of supporters in Spain, Belgium, Switzerland and Canada. In 1940, a widowed Empress Zita arrived in New York and was befriended by the Bullocks who invited her to spend summers with them in their ancestral homes on Royalston Common, which they did.

A mystery connected to the Empress has been what became of her royal jewels, including a famous 137 carat yellow diamond. It was known that in the last days of the Habsburg Empire, the Emperor had had the jewels transported to Switzerland, but there the trail disappeared. Most thought they had been stolen and recut amidst the confusion of WWII. However, the New York Times recently reported the real story of what happened to the diamond and other jewels. It said, the diamond "never really went missing. It's been in a bank vault in Canada since the family fled there, deposited by the Empress Zita, who told only two people — her sons Robert and Rodolphe — , and asked that, as a security precaution, it be kept undisclosed for 100 years after her husband's 1922 death. Before they died, the brothers passed the information only to their own sons", who remained tight lipped. No one had seen the jewels since 1919 until late 2025 when the vault was opened. Now, "The vow fulfilled, the family wants to display the jewels in Canada to thank the country for taking in the empress and her children."



Thank you to these Supporters who have donated in memory of Peter Kraniak so far. To make a memorial donation of otherwise support the RHS, send contributions to box 23, Royalston MA 01368.

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