

THETFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

April, 2006

UPCOMING EVENTS

PHOTO SCANNING DAY - April 29, 2006 A new event has been added to our calendar for 2006 - Photo Scanning Day. We'd like to add more local photos to our collection, and are offering to scan photos that are of historical interest. What can you do? Gather up your old photos of Thetford - individuals and family groups, scenery, events, school classes, and bring them to the Historical Society Library on April 29th, from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. We'll scan your photos and save them to CD for you to have, and keep a digital image for ourselves. All originals will be returned. Ideally, we'd like photo subjects to be identified, and the photo to be dated/dateable. Questions? Call THS at 785-2068.

JAMES WILSON GLOBES - May 25, 2006 One of our most important holdings is a pair of globes, one terrestrial and one celestial, made by James Wilson of Bradford, in 1822 and 1826 respectively. Wilson, a farmer and blacksmith in Londonderry, NH, taught himself geography and engraving and became America's first globe-maker. One of our globes was apparently used for instruction at Thetford Academy during the school's first decade.

On Thursday May 25, at 7:30 PM in the Bicentennial Gallery, Charles Latham will give a talk about the globes, telling Wilson's story, the history of globe-making, the primitive state of geographical knowledge in the 1820s, and on the work done to restore the globes at the Conservation Center in Williamstown, MA.

After the talk, you will have a chance, once you put on some cotton gloves, to examine the globes yourself.



TA Students examining a
Wilson globe on a visit to THS

SUMMER PROGRAMS The primary purpose of this newsletter is to let you know about our spring program. Our summer program is not nailed down yet, but we can give two definite dates. On Saturday and Sunday, the 24th and 25th of June, we will again be at the Vermont History Expo in Tunbridge. This year's theme is "Vermont Women in History", and we will feature pioneer Thetford farm wife and midwife Bathsheba Wallace, and 20th century photographer Clara Sipprell, who had studios in Thetford and then in Manchester, VT.

The Hughes Barn Museum will be open for the four Sundays in August and the first Sunday in September - Labor Day Week-end - from 2:00 to 5:00 PM.

We will have a complete summer schedule on our second newsletter in June.

IN MEMORIAM

This spring the Historical Society lost a longtime, loyal and hard-working member, Marian Fifield.

For most of the time the Society has had a library, Marian worked there, and during the winter kept the library open on Monday afternoons, and coordinated the work of the other regular volunteers. She kept coming faithfully even when it became very hard for her to get around. When the Probate Court in Chelsea threw a lot of 200-year-old records into a dumpster, she and Don were leaders in saving those records and getting them for us to process. She had a remarkable memory, and could produce all sorts of interesting facts. She did a great deal of work organizing the masses of papers left us by Mary B. Slade and Charles Hughes.

Marian served as our Vice-President for at least a decade. She taught a short course on Thetford history which got her students interested enough so that three of them subsequently became among our best board members. Her friendly interest in meeting people brought the Society many new members. For quite a while, she was one of our representatives on the board of the Thetford Library Federation. For many of those years, she kept a community calendar, and also helped with the annual fund-raising campaign.

Marian's interest in history went beyond her work for our Society. As Town Historian, she did two valuable things, which no-one before or since has done. When the Town Report stopped carrying vital statistics, she found something personal to say about everyone in the "Remembrance" list, and she spent a great deal of effort collecting clippings for annual scrapbooks which are now kept in the Wallace Vault. She spearheaded the effort to make the village of Thetford Center a national historic district. In all these areas, Marian will be greatly missed.



WINTER ACTIVITY IN OUR LIBRARY

We have continued to keep the historical library open three days a week, on Monday and Thursday afternoons, and on Tuesday mornings. We have served patrons from nearby towns, from all the New England states, and from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Florida, and Texas.

Our regular staff and our regular volunteers - Martha Wiencke, Lilla Willey and Barbara Condict, have finished the processing of several major collections: Thetford Academy, The First Congregational Church in Thetford, musicologist and camp founder Charles H. Farnsworth, and the Latham family of Lyme and Thetford.

As an additional way to promote greater use of our collections, we are developing a website which will eventually contain guides of our most important manuscript collections, photograph collections, paintings, and historic furniture. We have purchased software for cataloguing and imaging, and Martha Howard has been to several workshops on the use of these tools. At the same time, Martha keeps showing us the many uses of the internet in doing historical research.



