

# THETFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## *Calendar of Summer Events - 2007*

Saturday & Sunday	23-24 June	Exhibit at Vermont History Expo at Tunbridge Fairgrounds. Visit <a href="http://www.vermonthistory.org/expo/index.htm">http://www.vermonthistory.org/expo/index.htm</a> for an overview of events.
Saturday	21 July	Exhibit at Thetford Hill Fair, 1:30 to 4:30 PM.
Sundays	5, 12, 19, 26 August 2 September	Openings of Hughes Barn Museum, 2274 Route 113, 2-5 PM.
	September (date TBA)	Annual Meeting - Bicentennial Gallery

## Vermont History Expo

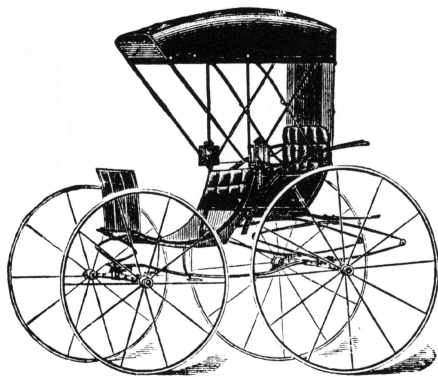
Our exhibit at Tunbridge this year will be about the Union Village Dam, as an example of flood control in the Upper Connecticut valley. The flooding of major rivers had been a problem for many years, but did not spark much government attention except in the Mississippi valley, where levees and other controls were built after the Civil War.

On the Connecticut River there were disastrous floods in 1927 and 1936, and The New Deal administration of Franklin Roosevelt, with a willingness to expand the powers of the federal government and a need to find jobs for the unemployed, developed a plan to control the Connecticut by damming its tributaries. Planning began in the 1930s for a dam on the Ompompanoosuc at Union Village where its branches came together, but those plans were delayed by World War II. The end of the war brought action. Plans were completed and land acquired in the area to be flooded, and construction was completed by 1950. The entire 720 acre dam reservoir area has never been completely flooded, but there have been numerous partial fillings.

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Our exhibit is in three parts. The first shows the extent of the floods of 1927 and 1936, especially in North Thetford and Pompanoosuc. A second section shows the actual construction of the dam - the huge amounts (1.7 million cubic yards) of material moved, and the changes in roads and topography. A final section shows some of the landmarks which disappeared in the dam area: including three covered bridges, a number of prosperous farms, and at least two Buddhist retreats built by Dwight Goddard. Major sources for these two sections are a photographic notebook assembled by Don Fifield and Kenneth Cook, and oral history tapes made by Don with Kenneth and his brother Kermit. John Judd also lent his personal recollections of the area and helped to identify features in photographs. Our exhibit will also include a three-dimensional model of the area constructed by TA student Nicholas Cooper, with mapping support and assistance from Andy Boyce. We hope to see you in Tunbridge.

## Barn Museum



We are planning to open the museum as usual from 2 to 5 PM on the four Sunday afternoons in August, and on the day before Labor Day, September 2<sup>nd</sup>. By opening time we hope to have completed two major improvements: to replace the clay floor of the carriage shed in the main barn with a crushed rock floor which will be a better base for the vehicles and tubs, as well as the dog-and horse-powered equipment that are stored there. Also we have deaccessioned a few large duplicate items in the main barn in order to make it easier to see the sleighs and buggies in the east part of the ground floor.

## Photographs

Our collection of photographs has received quite a few additions from different sources. We had a second photo scanning day in April which brought in photos from North Thetford and Thetford Center. Neighboring Historical Societies in Norwich and Lyme have provided copies from their archives that will be added to our own files, and used in upcoming exhibits at the Vermont History Expo and at the Barn Museum. A number of Thetford residents have also shared photos from their collections, as well as taken current photographs, comparing an historical view with a contemporary one. Thanks to Cynthia Taylor, Tim and Kathy Ouellette, Lelia Mellen, Heinz and Inge Trebitz, Martha Wiencke, and Susan Rump for their contributions. We are always interested in deepening our photographic collection. If you have Thetford-related photos and would consider letting us make a digital copy, please contact the Society. It's not necessary to wait until our next photo scanning session.

# Thetford History Month

In only four short years, the Town of Thetford will celebrate its 250<sup>th</sup> birthday, along with a number of other "Middle Grants" towns on both sides of the Connecticut River. In an effort to focus attention on Thetford's origins and in anticipation of this milestone, the Historical Society asked the Thetford Selectboard to designate the month of August as "Thetford History Month". They did so on June 9, 2007. The document reads:

*"The Thetford Selectboard recognizes and values the efforts of the Thetford Historical Society in recording, educating, and promoting an interest in the history of Thetford Town.*

*Thetford was chartered on August 12, 1761; therefore August is a particularly important month for the Town. The Thetford Selectboard is pleased and honored to officially declare August "Thetford History Month."*

We have shared this designation with the Town's libraries in the hopes that special library programming can be developed around Thetford's history during the month of August. Other organizations in Thetford are also welcome to participate, celebrating their own place in Thetford's past. The Historical Society is planning different events in conjunction with the Hughes Barn Museum's open August Sunday afternoons. Watch for more information!

## Winter Activity

We continued to keep the historical library open on Monday and Thursday afternoons and Tuesday mornings, staffed by Martha Howard, Charles Latham, Martha Wiencke, and Lilla Willey. There are always more things to process and catalog, and we have quite a few visitors and telephone inquiries. We had three well-attended meetings:

- A standing-room-only talk in October by VPR speaker Peter Fox Smith about his work with the photograph collection of Clara Sipprell, combined with an exhibit of her Thetford photographs;
- A talk in April held in Union Village jointly sponsored with Norwich Historical Society, by Civil War historian Howard Coffin, about his research for a new book about Vermont's Civil War places; and

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- A program and potluck supper in North Thetford in May, about Log Drives on the Connecticut, by William Gove, a retired forester who has written several logging-related books, with many interesting photographs.

Regrettably, we were unable to schedule our usual programs with the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades at the Elementary School or the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Thetford Academy, but Steve Niederhauser's Human Geography class did come down for a talk about globe-maker James Wilson of Bradford, and to look at our Wilson globes.

## **In Memoriam**

On April 29, the Society lost one of its most loyal workers, Louise Vaughan. Louise felt a great attachment to the northeast corner of the Thetford Hill common, where her father was born, her aunt Christine was postmaster and storekeeper, and her uncle Charles dispensed practical knowledge about water lines, electricity, automobiles and real estate. Louise was an early member of the Historical Society, and served it in many ways. She was secretary from 1960 to 1965, and treasurer in the late 1970s. In 1976, she retired and lived in Thetford all year. Just at the same time the Society began to develop its new library in the Bicentennial Building, and Louise, a great lover of books, worked there regularly until she was ninety. She took on and completed several major jobs: copying onto acid-free paper the genealogical notes that Mary B. Slade had made on fragile paper; making hundreds of boxes for our bound volume and for fragile books; copying all the Thetford sections from our 100-year run of Walton's Vermont Register; and finally, unfolding and sorting the boxes of early court documents rescued from a dumpster in Chelsea (wearing a mask to keep from breathing the mold.) She will be greatly missed.

In May, we lost one of our most reliable volunteers, Bryce Lyon. A retired professor of Medieval History at Brown University, he moved in to Kendal at Hanover ten years ago. He helped regularly with our library program with students from the Elementary school and the Academy; his favorite position was getting fifth and sixth graders to look carefully at the Town Charter. He and his wife, Mary, helped do two major shifts of all the books in our historical library. He also helped to design, hang, and take down the tarpaulins on the carriage shed at the Barn Museum.

## **Memberships**

It is time to pay dues to the Society for the year 2007 - 2008. If you would like to renew your membership, or become a new member, please use the enclosed envelope.