

THETFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

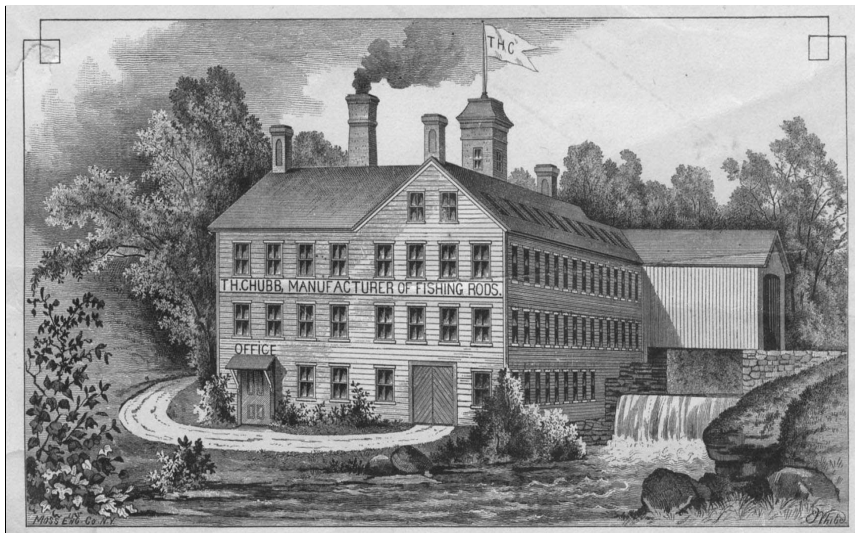
Calendar of Summer Events - 2008

Saturday & Sunday	21-22 June	Exhibit at Vermont History Expo at Tunbridge Fairgrounds. Visit http://www.vermonthistory.org , click on "Expo" for an overview of events.
Saturday	2 August	Exhibit at Thetford Hill Fair, 1:30 to 4:30 PM.
Sundays	3, 10, 17, 24, 31 August	Openings of Hughes Barn Museum, 2274 Route 113, 2-5 PM.

Historical Library Open Hours: Mondays and Thursdays, 2 to 4 pm, Tuesdays, 10 am to noon.

Visit us on the web: www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org

2008 Vermont History Expo



2008 marks the 9th year for the Vermont History Expo, held each June at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds. This year's theme is "*Industry and Innovation: Vermont Ingenuity*". The Historical Society will feature inventor and entrepreneur, Thomas Chubb, who owned and operated a fishing rod factory in Post Mills, from 1869 to 1891.



2008 History Expo, cont'd

In addition to being a talented businessman, Chubb was an inventor, holding a number of patents for fishing-related items. His products, catering to a society with leisure time and disposable income, were manufactured in Post Mills and shipped worldwide. At one point in its operation, TH Chubb employed more than fifty persons, and was the largest manufacturer of fishing rods in the country. We're fortunate to have a number of photographs, catalogues, and other artifacts from Chubb's enterprise, including an original U.S. Patent document, hand-tied flies based on color plates from a Chubb catalog, and a complete bamboo flyrod set, in a velvet-lined, leather case.

Our exhibit will trace Chubb's early days in Galveston, TX, where he ran a plantation and served in the Confederate Navy, defending Galveston Harbor; his move to Vermont for health reasons after the Civil War, following a battle with yellow fever; the establishment, rise and decline of the TH Chubb Fish Rod Company; and the Chubbs' retirement to Massachusetts. Don't miss this fascinating glimpse into life in Post Mills, during the latter half of the 19th Century.

Photo Restoration

In the past few years, developments in the computer world have made it possible to restore old photographs, greatly improving contrast, bringing out lost detail, restoring lost spots. Last fall, a couple from East Thetford, Meg Olsen and Tyler Brown, volunteered to do some of this work for us, as a donation. So far, they have completed perhaps thirty restorations, and they just took away some more to work on. In addition, they gave us a CD of the pictures they have worked on. This gives us a transferable and permanent copy, to add to the file we have been making with our own scanner. We are grateful for this helpful boost into the new century. Please visit the Historical Society's website www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org after July 1st, for some examples of what Meg and Tyler have accomplished.

1820 Thetford Academy Catalogue

This spring, Grace V. Anderson, sent us what is probably the first Thetford Academy catalogue, a broadside sheet 17" by 20.5", dated November, 1820. It gives information which fills in several gaps in the history of the Academy's first two years. The broadside was complete, but coming apart at several folds; it has been repaired and encapsulated in Mylar. A framed copy has been given to the Academy.



Half a century ago, when Mary B. Slade wrote her history of Thetford Academy's first century, 1819-1919, she was working from comparatively few records; the Academy charter, a treasurer's book, a couple of deeds, an order for lumber, an 1822 news clipping, and memories of some of the founders written decades after the event. Early board minutes had disappeared in a fire in 1843; the earliest available catalogue dated from 1827. This 1820 catalogue, though it does not describe courses, does list trustees, teachers, and most important, students, their home town, and where they boarded while at school.

The original trustees who signed the Academy charter in 1819 were mainly close neighbors around the Common on Thetford Hill: Judge Jedediah P. Buckingham, Judge Joseph Reed, Dr. Thomas Kendrick, Judge Simeon Short, the Rev. Asa Burton, and Col. Lyman Fitch (who ran the tavern). Other parts of the town were represented by Dr. Elijah Hammond of Rice's Mills, Timothy Bartholomew of North Thetford, and William Heaton, who had recently moved to Post Mills (and whose brother, a frugal philanthropist, had deeded to the Academy a lot sixty by forty feet, the exact dimensions of the school building). In the 1820 catalogue Buckingham and Short are not listed (though they are renamed as treasurer and secretary respectively). They are replaced by Gen. Frederick Smith of Stratford and John H. Cotton, to show support from outside Thetford.

The 1820 Catalogue lists a faculty of two: John Fitch as Preceptor and Miss Amy Smith as Preceptress. Because the school's early success depended largely on the reputation of its teachers, it is worthwhile to mention their qualifications. Mary B. Slade tells us that John Fitch, aged 49 in 1819, was a graduate of Brown, that he was the first pastor in Danville, VT, and served 23 years there; that he was a trustee of Middlebury College; and that he had been involved with Kimball Union Academy. Soon after he arrived in Thetford, he bought a house lot just south of the Academy, and deeded to the school ten-foot strips on the south and east sides of the school building, so that one could wash the Academy's windows, or paint its shutters, without trespassing on a neighbor's property. Miss Amy Smith, a native of Chelsea, had moved to Hanover while her brothers attended Dartmouth, and "followed their studies" with them. After three years at Thetford, she moved to Woodstock to found a girls' school there. To sum it up, the two teachers were well-prepared for their work.

The 1820 Catalogue lists a total of 133 students: 97 gentlemen and 36 ladies, and they represented a wide geographic spread. From nearby Vermont and New Hampshire there were:

35 from Thetford

13 from Lyme

7 each from Hartford and Strafford

6 from Chelsea, 4 each from Danville, Fairlee, Hartland, and Vershire

3 each from Bath and Hanover

2 each from Brownington, Norwich, Orford, Sharon, and Waterford

1 each from Haverhill, Lebanon, Orange, Piermont, Pomfret, and Weathersfield.

There were a few others from New York State - Albany, New York City, Sangerfield, and Greene; and from Boston and Hopkinton in Massachusetts. From even farther away were Charles Ranstead of Fayetteville, NC, a relative of Captain Ranstead of Thetford, and Daniel Tilden of Compton, L.C. [Lower Canada?]. In an era without media to carry widespread advertising, how did the news of a new school reach so many villages?

Most of these were boarding students. Until 1846 the Academy had no dormitory, so that all the boarding had to be done in private homes in or near the village. The trustees did their part to fill the need: Judge Reed had 11 boarders: Judge Buckingham - 4, Dr. Kendrick - 5, Judge Short - 6, Dr. Burton - 3. Dozens of other houses also opened up their doors.

Of the 97 male students in 1820, 28 are listed with an asterisk denoting "students in languages". This pretty clearly means "classical languages", and is another way of saying "college preparatory". Colleges of the time emphasized the classical. For example, Dartmouth in 1822 said that entering students should know the grammar, prosody, and literature of Latin and Greek, especially New Testament Greek. In addition they should know arithmetic, and Ancient and Modern Geography. These were the standards preparatory schools had to meet. Note the absence of history, modern language, and science. Among the classical group in 1820 was Isaac Hosford, who entered the Academy at 25, graduated from Dartmouth and Andover Seminary, served as pastor of several Massachusetts churches, and at the end of his career served in the newly organized church in North Thetford.

The remaining 69 gentlemen scholars fell into what later catalogues called the English section. The tuition charge for this section was \$2 per term; that for the classical section was \$3 per term. The catalogue doesn't tell us what they studied. It may make us wonder how one teacher managed to teach 97 boys in two different curriculums. He may have had adult assistants, or he may have organized older students as proctors or prefects to maintain order or even to do some teaching. In an era when memorization and recitation were more popular than now, this would have been easier to manage.

Finally we come to the 36 ladies who were students. The Academy was co-educational, but at least at the beginning female education was separate. Even a century later, the school had, and used, one door and one staircase for girls and one for boys. A notice in the Vermont Journal for 1822 lists the courses taught to the girls as Drawing, Painting, French language, History, and "useful and polite literature".

Two main conclusions may be drawn from studying the 1820 Academy Catalogue. First, in its general organization the Academy was not very different from what was there three or four decades later. More important, the Academy in its first years was a surprising success, achieved by a great deal of hard work, planning, networking and advertising, and community support.



Outreach

We have made especially good connections this year with the fifth-grade social studies classes at the Elementary School. In the fall we had both fifth grade classes down to the Barn Museum for visits. Each class split into smaller groups to go through different parts of the Museum with a staff member. In May, we arranged for a Revolutionary Era re-enactment group in full uniform to set up on the Common for a good part of the

day. 13 members of the 25th Continental Regiment, based in Easthampton, MA, guided students through three stations on the Common to learn about camp life and what a soldier might have in his kit, military drill and artillery (including cannon firing!), and textiles and furs. In the Historical Society, we had a number of items available for examination, including a 1790s map of Thetford and an early Congregational Church seating plan. We were fortunate to have the assistance of retired Dartmouth History Professor (and former THS trustee) Jere Daniell, who met with the students inside the Church, giving them a brief overview of early Thetford history. Selectboard member Michael Brown also read an early "New Hampshire Grants" document aloud, to simulate how important news would have been heard by townspeople during that period. We were pleased to welcome a number of Open Fields students to the re-enactment, as well.

In the fall Steve Niederhauser's class in Human Geography from Thetford Academy came to our library for a talk about our James Wilson globes. Students completing a special project for an Academy class utilized our archives to tell the story of the original Academy building, which yielded several oral history interviews. In May, the three sections of Joe Deffner's seventh-grade classes came in to research a Valley Quest they are doing on the southern half of Thetford Center village, roughly from Tucker Hill Road along Route 113 to Buzzell Bridge Road. Small groups of students researched a specific site or building (this year, Joe added several interesting gravestones from the new Thetford Center Cemetery as "sites"). Over the course of two days, students examined photographs, maps, census records, and other documents to obtain historical background information to complete a write-up of their location. The finished product is always a fun read, and we're looking forward to this year's Quest.

Barn Museum

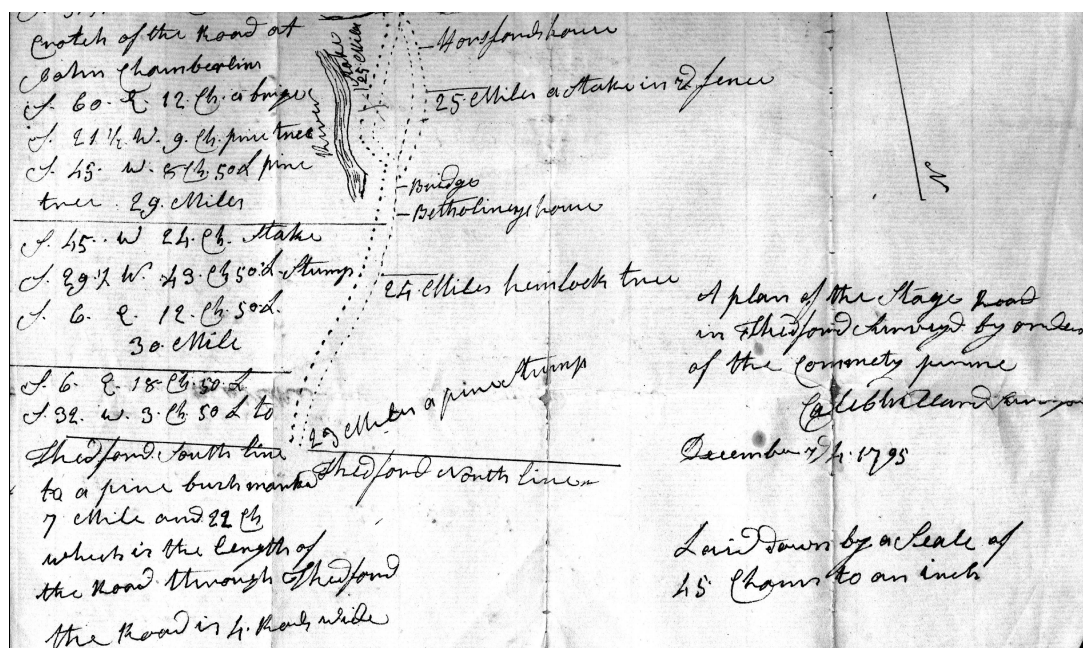
We are planning to open the museum as usual from 2 to 5 PM on the five Sunday afternoons in August. Last summer's work to the carriage shed and main barn was postponed until this year, and we hope to have that project completed by the Museum's opening. We're developing ideas for live, demonstration type activities on our open Sundays.



Mystery Map

With the recent attention paid to "Ancient Roads", we thought it might be interesting to share a section of a road survey, recently re-discovered in our archives. Originally drawn from a survey made in 1795 by Caleb Alard (sp?), this scan shows a short section of what would become a Stage/Post Road. Do you know where you are?

What's interesting to note is that the survey was revised in 1799, effectively eliminating the stretch of road at the uppermost portion of the image (shown with an "X"), and re-routing the road west, to higher ground. The eliminated portion would become North Thetford village, which wasn't settled until decades later. The complete survey, from Norwich north to Fairlee, is available to view at our Library; a scan of the entire document will be up on our website soon.



Memberships

It is time to pay dues to the Society for the year 2008 - 2009. If you would like to renew your membership, or become a new member, please use the enclosed envelope.