



# Thetford Historical Society

Summer/Fall 2011

*Celebrating 250 years of Thetford History!*

## Thetford Historical Society

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## Thetford's 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration Kicks Off With a Run For History

As part of the Thetford's 250th celebration, the Historical Society made a little history of its own, sponsoring a "Run for History" on June 25th. Over 150 runners gathered on the green to take part in the 5k (3.1-mile) event, which began and ended on the green, and which covered portions of the Dan Grossman Woods Trail at Thetford Academy. After a flintlock musket blast sent the runners on their way, the runners passed 50 signs (about one every 100 yards), each relating a different historical fact about Thetford.



After the runners finished, they then took one of five different five-question quizzes, which were based on the facts contained on the signs. Correct answers reduced the runners' final times by a minute; incorrect answers increased them by the same amount. Recent Thetford Academy graduate Jimmy Labelle, who crossed the finish line in second place, correctly answered all five of his questions and was awarded honors as the top competitor, displacing the fastest runner by answering all five of his questions incorrectly.

Many thanks to the sponsors, volunteers, and runners of all ages who made this event memorable. What a great way to kick off our celebration of Thetford's 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday!

- Charlie Buttrey

## Remembering Charles Latham

Charles Latham passed away this past year. His passing is a loss, both for the Thetford Historical Society and for the town. Charles had held the reins and guided the THS for the past 40 years.

Charles Latham, Jr. was born May 6, 1917 in Indianapolis, the only child of Charles Latham and Josephine (Parker) Latham. He attended school in Indianapolis, but his parents decided to send him East to Exeter Academy in New Hampshire to finish his early education. Following graduation, Charles remained on the east coast, and in 1939 he received an undergraduate degree from Princeton. A year later he received a Master's degree in history from Harvard. During World War II he served as a Lieutenant in the Army Signal Corps.

After the war he resumed his career as a history teacher, spending ten years at Dublin School in Dublin, New Hampshire and 24 years at Episcopal Academy in Philadelphia. During his years as a history teacher he also coached the cross country team. As a coach, he convinced record numbers of students to go out for his teams, and they won more than 190 meets. Charlie brought his respect and dedication to cross country running with him when he moved back to this area, and he is credited with starting the program at Thetford Academy.

In 1950 Charles purchased the Latham family home on Latham Road in North Thetford. He spent his summers in the handsome old house, which dates to the 1790's. With his interest in local history he began a long association with the Thetford Historical Society. He took over as president from another dedicated local historian, Charles Hughes.

Upon retiring from teaching in 1982, Charlie moved to Indianapolis. In 1985, he began working part time for the Indiana Historical Society as an Assistant Archivist on the staff of the Library. Charles combined his love of art, architecture and antiques with his love of travel, making many trips to Europe, where he studied cathedrals and acquired prints and paintings.

In 1997 Charles moved to Kendal at Hanover, which he called home for the remainder of his life, though he continued to spend his summers at his home in Thetford. Charles was ever the student and teacher; he spent long hours at the Historical Society researching, cataloging and archiving. He was always happy to work with students that showed an interest in history. He gave talks at the schools in town and helped with several social studies classes at TA. He continued to work at the THS and was active as president of the Society until just a short time before his death.

Charles was a tall, quiet and cordial man with a delightful sense of humor. He was a man who fit easily into any conversation, a cultured gentleman that lived in two worlds separated by several centuries of history, but he was always able to find a home in each. Charles Latham Jr. died on October 31, 2010, at the age of 93. We miss you Charlie.

- Marshall Van Norden

### Memberships

Becoming a member of the Historical Society is easy, and couldn't be more affordable. If you've enjoyed even one of our 250<sup>th</sup> events this year, won't you show your support by joining us? Fill out the enclosed envelope and mail it in. Dues are for a calendar year.

If you've already sent in your dues for 2011 membership, or if you're a new member this year, THANK YOU! We appreciate your support.

# Old Home Day

An old-fashioned Old Home Day was enjoyed by many in Thetford Center on July 2<sup>nd</sup> of this year. Thetford's Charter, a time line of Thetford, historical artifacts, and an exhibit of the 1911 Thetford Pageant were on display in the Town Hall. Many took advantage of the self-guided walking tours and Civil War Cemetery Quest for the cemetery behind the town hall. The Recreation Department led children in traditional games on the green. Dean Whitlock and crew entertained us with a fun-filled auction of many donations given by town residents and businesses. Mike Luce and his team of horses provided many gentle wagon rides through the village.

The Timothy Frost Church also had an exhibit in their vestibule, which included the history of the church building and on Rev. George Fox, former pastor at Timothy Frost and one of the "Four Chaplains," who went down with the USS Dorchester in World War II. Margaret Gilmore and friends presented a wonderful concert of music from 1761 to 1911 in the church's sanctuary. The performance concluded with a song from the 1911 Pageant entitled Ode To Thetford, with music by James T. Sleeper and lyrics by Sadie L. Wilson. Following a brief run-through of the tune, audience members sang the song, which hadn't been performed for 100 years.

Other highlights of the afternoon included great music played by Billy Ulz and Tate Buttrey, ice cream delights, and cold drinks including a farmer's haying punch called "Switchel". The day ended with a dinner on the green, prepared by Andy and Cheryl Ulz, to benefit the Class of 2012 at Thetford Academy. Many thanks to all who helped make the day so successful. Here's hoping the Old Home Day tradition continues!

- Janice Mousley

# Thetford Pageant Revisited

On Friday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, Thetford officially celebrates the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter. There are a number of events planned (see below), and one of particular interest in the updated Thetford Pageant.

The original Pageant was three performances in a meadow south of North Thetford village, on the banks of the Connecticut River. Close to half the town participated in some capacity, and estimates put the viewing audience in excess of 3,000 people. On its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we present an adaptation of the original as Act I, and an update of the past 100 years as Act II. Directed by Laura Shepard and co-produced by the Historical Society and The Parish Players.

As "Quail John" Chamberlin, Marshall Van Norden reprises the role played by his grandfather, Harley Sanborn, in the 1911 version. The story continues through the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, concluding with an Old Home Day celebration. Act II highlights events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the 1927 Flood, the Depression, the 1938 Hurricane, World War II, building the Union Village Dam and Interstate 91, and Thetford's moment in the national limelight, when it was the first town in the nation to call for the impeachment of President Richard Nixon at the 1974 Town Meeting.

Performances are held at the Martha Jane Rich Theater at Thetford Academy, and admission is a steal at \$ 2.50/person. Bring your family, bring some friends, and watch your history come alive!

## 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Weekend Schedule

### Friday, August 12

- 2:50 pm: Bell-ringing at Thetford's churches.
- 5:00 pm: Picnic on the grounds at TA
- 6:00 pm: Town Photo at TA
- 7:00 pm: Pageant Performance
- Dusk: Fireworks @ TA, after Pageant

### Saturday, August 13

- 7:00 pm: Pageant Performance

### Sunday, August 14

- 2:00 pm: Hughes Barn Museum opens with Charter Day
- 4:00 pm: Final Pageant performance, cast and crew reception follows.

Contact THS at 802-785-2068 for more information



## 2011 Schedule

# Hughes Barn Museum

*open 2:00 to 5:00 pm on the dates below*

- August 14, 2011 Charter Day  
 Dartmouth professor emeritus Jere Daniell joins us on our 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary weekend to talk about Thetford's place in the New Hampshire Grants: what did we share with other 1761 towns, and what made us unique.
- August 21, 2011 Lyme Town Band and Box Social  
 Remember the school-building scene in *Oklahoma*? Pack your best box lunch for auction, bring a bidder, and enjoy a concert of traditional music with the Lyme Town Band.
- August 28, 2011 Abenaki in Vermont  
 Visit with Nathan Pero, Chief of the Koasek Tribe, and learn firsthand about Native history, culture, life, and lore. Learn about the Abenaki today, meet the "Three Sisters", and make a traditional game to take home.
- September 4, 2011 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pie Contest  
 Roll That dough! Peel that fruit! Whip that cream! It's time once again to bake your best pie for our Pie Contest. Not a baker? Come enjoy a slice. Celebrity judges, great prizes. More info on our website.
- September 11, 2011 Civil Liberties and National Security  
 A *Vermont Humanities* Speaker's Bureau program. On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Constitutional Law expert Richard Hesse explores preceding tensions and the world's reaction to this life-changing event.

**Tour the Historical Society's four buildings, full of artifacts from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which were common to rural life in Thetford.**

**The Hughes Barn Museum is operated by the Thetford Historical Society. Admission is free. All programs are held OUTSIDE. Please bring a blanket or chair for seating.**

**Hughes Barn Museum ~ 2274 Route 113, Thetford, VT ~ [www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org)  
 802-785-2068**

### Other Dates to Remember...

Monday, August 29 <sup>th</sup> 7:00 pm First Congregational Church	<u>Gustavus Loomis</u> Gustavus Loomis was born in 1789 in Thetford. A West Point graduate, he had a long military career, retiring at the rank of General after the Civil War. His father, Beriah Loomis, was active in the early years of the First Congregational Church. Loomis biographer and Army Chaplain Ken Lawson.
Monday, September 5 <sup>th</sup> 11:00 am Post Mills	<u>Labor Day Parade</u> Participate in this year's Parade, where the theme is Thetford's History? Dress as your favorite ancestor or historical figure, drive a horse and buggy or an antique car, or design a float. Prizes for best entries!
Friday, September 16 <sup>th</sup> 7:00 pm Thetford Congregational Church	<u>Town Meeting 2061</u> Where will we be in 50 years? Come prepared to think, plan, and vote on non-binding articles for Thetford's 300 <sup>th</sup> Birthday. Held on the 250 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Proprietors' first meeting in Hebron, Connecticut.
Saturday, October 8 <sup>th</sup> 6:00 pm North Thetford Church	<u>Invasion on the Mountain: Will Ryan and the Civilian Conservation Corps</u> Author Judith Edwards presents leads a discussion of her recent book on the Corps in Vermont. Hear more about Thetford's own CCC Camp, which was located just off Latham Road. Potluck dinner at 6:00, followed by program.

## *Fifty for 250, and Other Anniversary Items*

To mark the Town's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Historical Society has developed a number of commemorative items to remember 2011's events. We began in late winter by sponsoring a logo contest, which was won by TA Class of 2011 artist, Erika McCormick. Erika's design incorporated many of the landmarks that define Thetford: a mix of wooded and open land, grazing animals, a country church, a mill, and, front and center, a covered bridge. The logo has been used on hats, t-shirts, tote bags, publicity materials, and on the cover of our book.

We also designed a woven cotton coverlet, in shades of blue and white, which includes many familiar town locales. In the center is a school district map, and the names of 15 school districts are printed around the coverlet's border. The coverlet is a terrific keepsake item.

The Society also published a collection of short stories entitled *Fifty for 250 - an Anthology of Thetford's History - 1761 - 2011*. The first story is the complete wording of the Charter; the last, an article about Charles Latham, written by two TA students in 2011. 22 authors contributed their research and recollections on such topics as life in the Grants, separation of Church and State, Thetford Academy, mills, roads and bridges, floods, fires, and hurricanes, and people such as Clement Sumner, George Knox, Bathsheba Wallace, Alanson Sanborn, Christine Vaughan, and Mary B. Slade, to name only a few.

In short story format, the goal was a book that you could pick up and read, put down, and then pick up again, as time allows. The stories are both interesting to read alone and suitable to be read aloud to children. Complete with historic photographs, *Fifty for 250* is a fascinating collection of great stories, guaranteed to put you in a Thetford frame of mind.


For more information on available 250<sup>th</sup> items, including images and availability, please visit [www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org/250Items.html](http://www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org/250Items.html). It's available at the Historical Society, and at all our events this year. We're also happy to ship, if that is more convenient.

## How the Cressman Family Came to Thetford, VT

We were "Flatlanders" but it is interesting to follow our connections to Thetford. In 1958 my husband Howard Cressman and I rented a house in Hanover for the summer intending to look for a place to buy so we could come up for the long summer vacations, my husband enjoyed as a math teacher at the Pennington School in Pennington, New Jersey. We looked and looked at the newspaper notices for places to buy. Finally we found an ad in the Dartmouth Alumni magazine and saw places listed in Thetford. Howard went up alone and found "Uncle Charles" Vaughan sitting under his apple tree. He took Howard to many places and after Howard showed him the Dartmouth Alumni Magazine said "Sure, I have those too." On seeing the farmhouse on the way up to Camp Farnsworth, Howard became very interested. To make a long story short we ended up purchasing the old house. When my then one year old daughter Nancy saw the house she crawled in the cupboards. The previous owner was William Joiner who had donated the land for Camp Farnsworth to become a Girl Scout camp.

In the summer of 1959 we came up bag and baggage, the car bursting with Caroline, Howard, Nancy and Freddy. The first person to call upon us was Ed Tyler who wanted us to help with the Bible School and to learn about the Church "on the hill." We felt welcomed and jumped into the summer "routines." I tried my hand at Bible School teaching, while my daughter Nancy, being too young, stayed with Lila Willy's baby girl. Our mornings were filled with going to the library where there was a wonderful playground and then down to the "Pompy" for swimming each afternoon.

The Fair was a wonderful introduction to summer life. Eventually, I was in charge of the children's table and Howard was the treasurer. We have lots of memories of counting all the coins late into the night. We remember dressing up for the children's parade and Grampa's train.

Cont'd 

We continued coming each summer through our children's high school, college and adulthood. Howard Cressman died in 1984, but I still came every summer. Eventually I moved to Kendal at Hanover when it opened in 1991.

Part of our Thetford life was Nancy going each summer, once she was old enough, to Camp Farnsworth. We saw campers in church on Sundays and walking past our house often. They always shouted a Turkish salutation that translated "Hello all you men and monkeys." Living so close to camp made the camp culture feel very close to us. At the end of each summer Nancy and Freddy used to canvass the tent platforms for treasures left behind. A good haul might include a hair brush, a comic book and a hair tie. Freddy became friends with the nurse's son, Greg Brown. The camp let the two boys swim at lunchtime. Freddy went climbing on the long hikes because he could carry a heavy load. Freddy also worked for the camp's groundskeeper, who taught him how to fish.

I was active in the historical society, played bridge with the Manchesters, Vaughans and Lathams. We were friendly with Mrs. Sperry. Our family picked raspberries along the back roads, went for rides in the evening to count deer, had Popsicles every day from the post office and on special occasions ate at the Country Kitchen in East Thetford. We always went to "Old Home Day." Our children played with lots of summer children. The Carl Clark family was our closest friends. My son, joining with the young Macks and the Clark boys planned summer hiking excursions culminating in a three night hike. They called themselves THOC— Thetford Outing Club. I made them over-the-shoulder ruck sacks to carry lunches for the shorter hikes.

Now at the present time Fred lives on Houghton Hill Road in a "camp" we built in 1974. Howard designed the cabin and it was built by George Stowell. Fred cares for the acres of woodland, cuts wood for heating his cabin and preserves the forest for wildlife habitat and cross country skiing. Nancy lives on the Union Village road in Norwich. She taught art at Thetford Elementary School for 21 years, following her life-long dream to be like "Mrs. Joiner" who was the kindergarten teacher and our first neighbor in Thetford when we lived on the road up to Camp Farnsworth. After her marriage and birth of

her son Asa, named for Asa Burton, she sent Asa to Maple Leaf Day Care. There Asa had Ron Koeppel as a teacher—remarkable since we knew him from our hometown of Pennington, where he had grown up. So in the very spot Nancy had played the Virgin Mary once she was old enough to go to Bible School her son was now in Day Care with the son of her former Girl Scout leader!

It is surprising to me how many of the young people who summered in Thetford are now returning and part of the community – In addition to my children there is Mary Dan (Clouser) Pomeroy, Beth (Wyman) Fernandez, Laurie Burnham and Duncan and Kerstin Nichols.

Thetford got deep into my family—partly because of her natural beauty and partly because of the wonderful friends and memories we had from our many summers there. My daughter is fond of saying that throughout her growing up when she was upset she'd just turn the lobe of her ear as if it were TV channel knob and bring herself to the view of Mount Smarts and the surrounding hills as a vision of comfort.

Written by Caroline Cressman Riggs, age 95

Typed by Asa Berolzheimer, age 13 and Nancy Cressman, age – we won't go into that.

## Volunteer?

Interested in getting involved? We'd love to have you! Volunteers are always welcome - here's a sample of what you could do:

- Be a docent at the Barn Museum
- Offer services in kind
- Assist at a 250 event
- Publicize THS activities
- Help with a school group visit
- Catalogue manuscripts and artifacts
- Answer genealogy queries
- Serve as a Board member

Let us know where your interests lie, and we'll find something for you to do!