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# THETFORD

## Historical Society

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## Researching Your Thetford Home

Aimee Toth

*Aimee Toth is a Kindergarten teacher at Thetford Elementary School who is passionate about history. After spending time at the THS library, it was clear that she was someone who would be a strong advocate for education and outreach efforts, and she soon joined the THS Board of Trustees. Utilizing items from our collection, Aimee shares Thetford's history hands-on with her students. She graciously wrote this article for us, shortly before she left the board in July. We hope she is able to return when time permits.*

I have always loved historic homes. I love their unique architectural details, their uneven boards, and now, nearly five years after purchasing our 1839 home, I love the connections it has given me to the history of our town, Thetford.

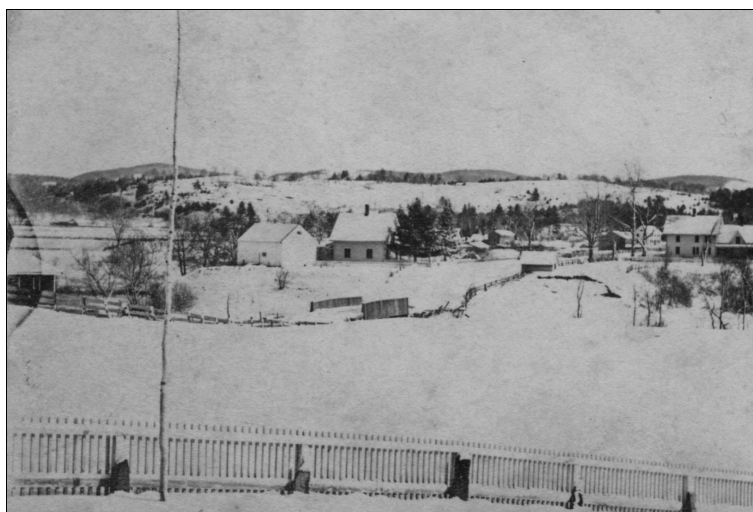
My first step in researching the history of our home was to contact Thetford Historical Society. Martha immediately began combing through the many files that might pertain to our home. I was surprised at just how many historic home photos were available from places I readily recognized. Having so many photographs available of our village helped me as we thought about various renovation projects. It was important to me that changes we made were historically consistent. Soon Martha found two separate photographs of our home from a distance, one

showing our barn without the connector and one with. We were able to roughly date the first picture as occurring before 1870 as the covered bridge had not yet been built. The second photograph, showed the house with the main barn

and connector as it is today. In addition to this, we were able to locate two separate owner names from maps at the historical society. These names would be helpful as I intended to also do deed research.

Several months passed and I was engrossed in various home improvement projects, one of which was cleaning up the barn.

While working upstairs, I discovered a diary from the 1940's lodged between old floorboards and under a protective coating of dust. Which family it had belonged to, I was unclear.



View of Post Mills, taken from behind Peabody Library. Toth house center, beyond the bridge.

*THS Archives*

## Thetford Historical Society Open Hours

Mondays: 2:00 to 4:00 pm  
Tuesdays: 10:00 to noon  
Thursdays: 2:00 to 4:00 pm

*or by appointment*

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## Thetford Historical Society

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# Summer Recap

## Vermont History Expo

2012 was a VT History Expo year (held in June in Tunbridge), and we participated with an exhibit entitled *Thetford In The Civil War*, which featured persons with Thetford connections who played distinctive roles during the conflict. Thanks to Laurie Burnham, Linnea Burnham, Shenia Covey, Amika Flanigan, Robert a Howard and Susannah Howard for their research assistance. This exhibit was also displayed at Old Home Day and at Latham Library during the summer and fall.

## Old Home Day in Thetford Center

Building on last year's event, THS's Janice Mousley took the lead role in planning Old Home Day in late June. A quilt show and stirring concert of Civil War era music was held in the Timothy Frost Church, and organized by church members. The Town Hall and Community Center featured historical exhibits, and a vintage buggy from the Barn Museum sat outside. There were children's games, craft vendors, an auction, and lots of opportunities for great food. Old Home Day 2013? We welcome your input and participation for an even better family summer event.

## Hughes Barn Museum

Many areas were re-arranged and spruced up at the Barn Museum, thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers. We were open for five Sundays, and programs featured Nate Pero and the VT Abenaki, a Lyme Town Band concert, and Wood Turning and Blacksmithing with Mike Hebb and Alan Waterman. Thetford's Charter was displayed on our first Sunday (which fell on Thetford's 251<sup>st</sup> birthday), and our finale was the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Pie Contest. Thanks to all who contributed to the 2012 Museum season – we're already planning for next year.



Pie Contest Judges Jennifer Gernhard, Dalia Pagani and Jessica Eaton  
*Photo by Bob Metzler*

## Researching Your Thetford Home, *cont'd.*

I discovered a record of what the weather had been like, the ordinary comings and goings of family, when they went to the creamery, and dug potatoes. To find out the diary's owner, as well as attempt to trace the deed back to the names listed on the maps, I headed down to the Town Office. In the massive vault, I began the laborious task of tracing back each deed transaction. Tracy was wonderful in orienting me to how the books worked and I eventually found the family that the diary should be returned to. I also gained several new family names and a possible connection to Dr. H.H. Niles.

I returned the diary to the granddaughter of the owner, a former resident of our home, I was able to learn some of the changes that were made since she lived here. In addition to this, neighbors have also provided details about their childhood recollections of our home. Mrs. Southworth shared that the curved plaster alcove was used for the Miller family piano.

Living in an old home is fascinating and provides many mysteries for you to unravel. While exploring the history you will have the joy of learning not just more about your home, but also find out more about your local community history and your neighbors. In addition to pictures, the Historical society can help identify various artifacts you might find in some corner of your barn or home. It can also be helpful to make a visit before beginning a big renovation project. Many rare historical details could be lost without realizing it. The Thetford Historical Society has many resources to support you in your quest. Stop in soon and see what new things you can learn about your Thetford home!

*Aimee Toth*



## Geography Bee

Coming up on Saturday, November 10<sup>th</sup> and kicking off National Geography Week, the Historical Society is sponsoring a Geography Bee, for youth (grades 5-8) and adults alike. Three-person teams will compete at Thetford Academy, answering multiple choice questions about Canada and The United States. Winning teams will receive a prize!

We are raising funds for a collection assessment and preservation of a number of items at the Hughes Barn Museum. If you'd like to help but feel you're more of a supporter than a participant, we're looking for team sponsors, as well.

The Bee starts at 1:00 pm in the Gym, and spectators are welcome. More information and registration forms are available online at [www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org/2012GeoBee.html](http://www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org/2012GeoBee.html).

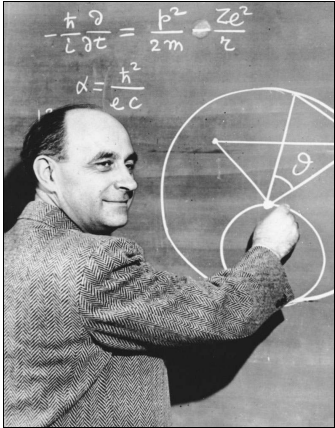
## WWII Homefront

Our last public program of 2012 will be held on December 7<sup>th</sup>, at Thetford Elementary School. Virginia Davenport will offer her reminiscences from the 1940s, as a military wife.

In Thetford, there were Victory Gardens and war relief efforts at Camp Hanoum, community food preservation at Thetford Academy, and enemy plane spotting on Thetford Hill. The Historical Society will have a number of items from our archives to view, including newspapers, ration books and stamps, photographs, and more.

The community is invited to join us, beginning at 6:00 pm with a potluck supper in the cafeteria (with period music!) Followed by our speaker, and a chance to ask questions and share memories with those who lived through that era.

# You Never Know Who You'll Meet In Thetford...



...and the man at left is a good example. Do you recognize the face? The following account comes from Nina Strauss, who said 'this should really be written down somewhere'. Right you are, Nina.

*"In 1941, Enrico Fermi and his family visited Thetford as guests of Dr. and Mrs. Jan Schilt (he, who with his daughter, Joan (Luikart), built a cabin on Houghton Hill).*

*Dr. Fermi visited us with our remodeled barn and seeing a supply of lumber, was inspired to attempt his first woodworking adventure: a rocking chair! He carefully sawed out rockers and proceeded to craft a chair, which at first only accommodated someone in a doubled-over position. He made the necessary correction and the chair graced our porch until the 1942 Academy fire which destroyed our barn, as well."*

## Photo Op

Do you enjoy looking at historic images? Are you a photographer, yourself? If so, we have the perfect activity!

Browse our growing photo archive at [www.flickr.com/thetfordvt](http://www.flickr.com/thetfordvt), then get out there and shoot your version of the same location today. We'll post your photo side by side with ours, giving you credit for your work. You'll be helping to build our archive for future generations. More info is available at [www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org/LandscapeChange.html](http://www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org/LandscapeChange.html).



## Vermont History Day Contest - 2013

Know a creative, inquisitive student in grades 5-12? They're eligible to participate in the Vermont History Day Contest, held each year in early April. The 2013 theme is "**Turning Points in History - People, Ideas, Events**". State winners are eligible to travel to Maryland and compete nationally in June.

More information is online at [www.vermonthistory.org](http://www.vermonthistory.org), under the Education tab. Your Historical Society is a great source of primary source research material - we'd love to help you with an entry!

**Thetford Historical Society  
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