

THE THETFORD

Historical Society



In Europe and America, the period around Halloween (All Saints Day and also Samhain, the Celtic New Year) is the time when ghosts and witches are most apt to make an appearance. Thetford has its own resident ghosts and at least one historical witch, none of whom pay much attention to the season. The story of the witch is told in a letter, now in the THS archives, written by an aunt to her niece early in the past century. (The letter also mentions a very strange sister and a murder, but they're for a different occasion!)

A Thetford Ghost Story

By Dean Whitlock

The ghost story begins quite recently – in fact, it's still going on, in Post Mills, on the site of what had been the Commodore Inn!

The house there, built in 1914, four years after the inn burned, now belongs to Andy Boyce and Jennifer Boeri-Boyce. They moved in about 13 years ago and bought the house after renting for the first six years. The moment they moved in, they learned that the house made noises. They didn't think much about it at first (old houses do that), but they came to realize that the noises were very regular. There was a door that creaked at about 11:00 every night, as though it were being opened. There were footsteps on the stairs.

"But the big thing," Jennifer relates, "was music, like someone was singing or playing music in one of the rooms."

But whenever anyone went into the room, the music was coming from the next room, always just out of sight. Friends across the street said they had also heard the music in the house when they visited.

A summer resident descended from the previous owners said she had seen orbs—glowing balls believed by many to indicate ghosts—floating outside around the house.

One of their sons woke up in the night and felt someone standing over him. He was frightened by it, but Jennifer says she has felt that presence, too, and it is never threatening or vicious.

One night, about five or six years ago, Andy awoke in the middle of the night and saw a young couple in the room. They were dressed in clothes that appeared to be from the 19th Century. The woman wore a fancy dress and carried a parasol. They moved silently across the room and disappeared.

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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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Time on your
Hands?

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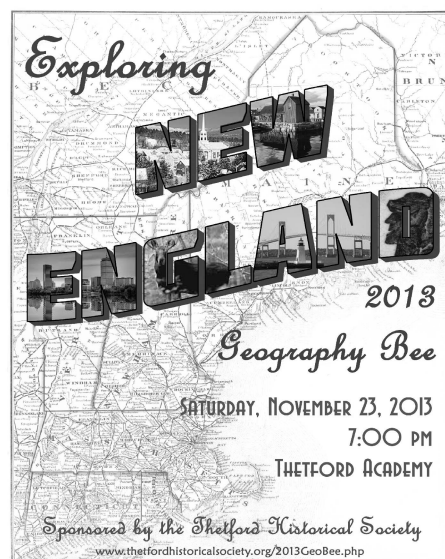
Contact THS to see how
you can get involved.

Director's Notes

We've made this newsletter our All Hallows' edition, paying homage to all that is wonderfully creepy and other-worldly. The first part of November has long been celebrated as a time to reconnect with our ancestors. It has been described as the period when the veil between the living and the dead is at its thinnest; when departed souls are most likely to return to the world they had left behind. In cultures around the globe, people remember and pay respect to those that have gone before them, leaving flowers and other decorations on graves and making offerings of drink, food, and illumination, to guide souls on their journey. It is in this spirit that we share a few such tales from Thetford; maybe not one-of-a-kind, but definitely homegrown. Special thanks to Dean Whitlock for taking on the story of the Post Mills ghost.

Geography Bee - "Exploring New England"

We have several significant end-of-year events to be aware of, and we hope you'll participate! Coming up on November 23rd is the THS 2nd Annual Geography Bee, a fun event for adults and kids in grades 5-8. 3-person teams answer multiple choice questions about the Geography of New England. Winning teams will receive fun New England themed prizes, and funds raised are earmarked for conservation of items at the Barn Museum. Information and registration materials are available on our website. Now don't say, "Ewww, Geography..." You know more than you think you do, and if your team is a winner, you and your friends could go home with some really great prizes.



Annual Meeting

Unfortunately, we need to re-do our Annual Meeting of October 13th, as we did not have a quorum present. On Sunday, November 24th at 1:00 pm, we will have a brief business meeting, followed by election of officers and trustees. This meeting will be held at the Historical Society's Library.

Alanson Sanborn Funeral Event

On Sunday, December 8th the 150th anniversary funeral service for Alanson Sanborn will be held in Thetford Center; his brief biography is on the back cover. Telling Alanson Sanborn's story tells the story of the Civil War: youthful idealism vs. entrenched societal beliefs, struggles for freedom and equality, sacrifice, death, and eventually justice, within the bounds of the law. Again, watch for details as they become available.

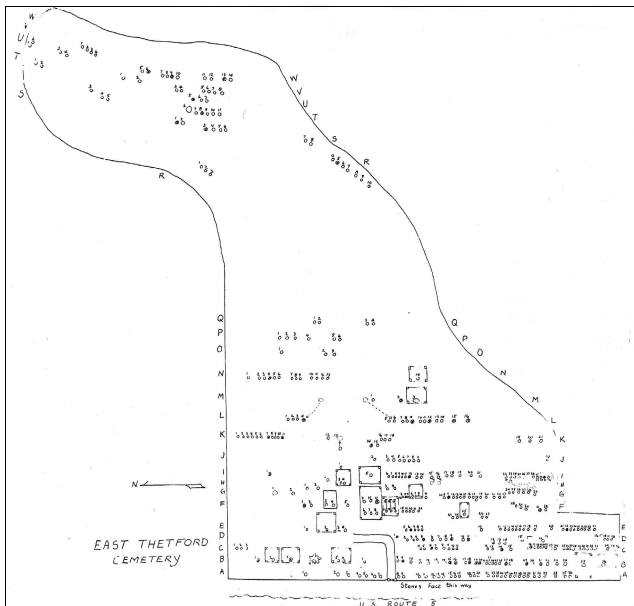
A Hosford Family Migration

or

Is This Why There's an Open Space in the East Thetford Cemetery?

By Martha Howard

One of the most enjoyable aspects of working with the Society's archives is discovering a clue to something that's puzzled you for a while. If you've ever visited the town's oldest cemetery in East Thetford, (which you should make a point to do, if you haven't), you'd notice that there are a number of really early burials, way in the back along the tree line. These are groupings of families, following the contour of the lot, not really lined up in rows like a traditional layout. Closer to Route 5 and the fence, it's a bit more organized, grid-like. But in the middle, there's... what? A big, open space. Is there ledge below the surface here, which would have precluded digging graves? Are there burials which were never monumented? Did the stones break off and get tossed over the bank? (This did happen, unfortunately). Or was something or someone else responsible for what looks like a kind of no man's land in the middle?



East Thetford Cemetery, from **Register of Persons Buried in the Cemeteries of the town of Thetford, Vermont** by Robert Bacon

Finding such a clue is often hit-or-miss: you read something in a letter while cataloguing a stack of papers, or in the course of doing genealogical research. I found the following in the Hosford collection, when reading former North Thetford resident Harriette (Hosford) Cushman's family history. Written ca. 1900, it provides a truly fascinating glimpse into nearly 150 years of life (and death) in early Thetford.

The Hosfords were among the first wave of Thetford's early settlers, moving here, like so many, from Hebron, Connecticut. Of seven children, four brothers – Joseph, Aaron, Elihu and Obadiah – and one sister, Mindful, came to town, beginning in 1765. The were joined later by their mother, Eunice, when the sons were established. Eunice Hosford died in 1799. Of her, Harriette writes: “[Great] Great Grandmother Eunice must have been buried in the old cemetery below [East Thetford], and all record of the spot, if any existed, is not known. Soil clayey, and all landmarks upset.” This is the first mention that all might not be well in the cemetery in East Thetford.

The Joseph Hosford mentioned above would have been Harriette's great grandfather, who married Mary Peters. Together, they had 12 children, among whom were two daughters, one named for her grandmother: “...Eunice wed Col. Amos Wheeler: lived and died near Child's Pond, buried in this cemetery, and records say she was the first child born in town. Sarah wed Moses Cadwell, lived in this part of town to a good old age, and is buried in the old yard [East Thetford].” Harriette thus identifies the two sisters mentioned in our witch story.

Another of Joseph's children was a son, Aaron, who was Harriette's grandfather. Regarding her grandparents, Aaron and Lucy (Strong) Hosford, Harriette notes that they died in the same year, 1818. She remembers her grandfather, “...in the black coffin, lying on the long kitchen table; and the grandmother's illness – could not breath[e], pneumonia. They were buried in the old cemetery, but in 1830, were removed to this.”; ‘this’ being North Thetford/Pleasant Ridge Cemetery. So, their bodies were apparently exhumed and relocated to another cemetery... interesting.

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A Bewitching Account, From the Archives

Thursday, evening

My dear Mary,

Prepare for a witch story. A long, back when I was a little girl if anything mysterious, or not readily accounted for happened the witches had the credit of it. If one had a very black cat with a white "necktie" beware of meeting that animal after 'night-fall.' "It might bewitch you." There was a man (Moses Cadwell) who lived not far from us who had much trouble with a witch rooster. He would crow at dead of night; was the cause of the hens stealing their nests and bringing off broods of shy wild chicks; then sometimes they would be awakened by his crowing in the bedroom; then before they could get a light they could hear him calling his birds and leaving as silently as he came. Mr. Cadwell was a money digger too, believed there was treasure hidden on his farm. He was said to practice incantations. He had a neighbor with whom he was at variance, their wives were sisters. At a certain time there was a family gathering at which the two sisters were present, the husband of one did not come (I do not remember why) but when about to return, the one who was there said the sisters should ride and he would walk; so they started but before they had gone far they entered a road that led through the woods.

Presently the horse grew lame so lame he could not carry them both, so Mrs. C. got down and walked and the horse lost his lameness although Col. W. had mounted and was riding with his wife. When he found the horse was not lame he turned back and told Mrs. C. that nothing ailed the horse and that she must ride; so she mounted again; very soon the horse was lame in a different leg, so lame he could scarcely step and she was obliged to get down again; just as they emerged from the woods at dusk, Mrs. C. distinctly heard the flapping of a rooster's wings as about to crow. The Col. was so persuaded of the existence of witches that he nailed a horseshoe over the horse stable door saying that "He had no fears for himself but his favorite filly must not be harmed." He kept it there for years. . . The Colonel I speak of in the witch story was Col. Wheeler, Great-Grandfather to Ella Wheeler Wilcox the poet and authoress. Now I must close with love for it is bedtime; I hope this will amuse you if no more.

Ever affectionately, Auntie

A Hosford Family Migration, *cont'd*

The deaths of her grandparents must have made an impression on Harriette, born in 1814, who would have been only four years old when they died. She would witness such loss many times throughout her long life. The following November (1819), her older sister, Martha, age 24, became sick after visiting her friend, Polly Strong, who was very ill with fever. Polly died shortly thereafter and Martha attended the funeral with her parents. Harriette describes their wagon ride home: *"When reaching the corner at Child's, Martha slipped out and turned northward, shrinking, as well one might, from that dismal yard that was soon to open a grave to her. She was soon attacked by that same fatal fever, which ran its course in eight days, attended with delirium and great distress."*



Harriette (Hosford) Cushman, about the time she wrote her family history.

Following her sister's death, Harriette writes: *"How her young companions stood beside her black coffin, weeping aloud, within which she was viewed through an oval glass, all clad in white cambric called a shroud. The coffin, too, covered with a black velvet spread called a pall. Then, then death spoke louder to the living than today. She was carried to the dismal old yard below, where she lay until the autumn of 1830, when the remains of many were brought to this blessed cemetery."* Now, wait a minute. *"...the remains of many"*? How many is many? Robert Bacon's *Cemetery Register* and the early records and plan of the Pleasant Ridge Cemetery, held the answer.

Pleasant Ridge's original layout called for nine Ranges (columns of lots, each lot with space for eight burials) with seven lots in each Range. Dimensions were precise: the Cemetery would be "16 rods long or 264 feet - 5 rods or 82 feet, 6 inches wide. Lots 6 feet, 6 inches wide by 23 feet, 9 1/3 inches. Wide alley 9 feet, the other long ones 4. Cross alleys 5 feet. Gate at SW corner." It would be neat, orderly, and quite a change from the meandering rows in East Thetford's oldest section. There are 14 lots in Ranges 1 & 2, and when the first

lotting plan was drawn Hosfords owned 10 of them, either in part or in full. Clearly, the family felt a strong connection to the newly established cemetery, which was only a short walk from several Hosford homes. In fact, the first burial was a Hosford; Ralph, in August, 1830. He was followed closely by other family members, **15 of whom** had pre-deceased him.

So Harriette's history is proved out; the family did indeed move *'the remains of many'* from East Thetford to North Thetford. While such a mass exhumation must have been a grim task, the thought behind it is understandable. The cemetery in East Thetford would be two miles away from home: a few minutes by car for us, but a fair distance in 1830, by wagon or on foot. And a number of those moved were children. Parents separated from their offspring in life could rest beside them in death, and near other family members, in the newly established cemetery. Harriette herself is buried in North Thetford in the aforementioned Hosford section and shares a plot with Gustavus Cushman, her son, who died in 1850 at three years of age.

Is a Hosford re-location responsible, at least in part, for the gravestone-free portion of the East Thetford Cemetery? Could be. Did other families do the same? It's certainly possible. Will we ever know for sure what's up with that odd patch of unmarked middle ground? Hard to say, but keep an eye out, because the answer's out there: somewhere, somebody has left us a clue.



A Thetford Ghost Story, *cont'd*

Not too long afterward, the family went to visit the Hughes Barn Museum, where they saw a woman's dress on display. "It struck me when I first saw it," Andy recalls. "I didn't even think about it; I said, 'That's the dress the woman was wearing!'"

Then Jennifer read the tag on the dress and exclaimed, "Do you know whose dress this was?" It had belonged to Vera Powell, who had lived in the brick house next to the Commodore Inn. And it was her daughter, Hattie, who had built the new house in 1914.

Some time later, the friends across the road came to visit. Neither Andy nor Jennifer had told them about the dream or the dress, but one said to the other, "You should tell them about the young woman you've seen walking around our house."

She did. And what she had seen was a young woman in a fancy old-style dress, carrying a parasol.

Jennifer and Andy say that the music and other activities have slightly diminished each time they've made some change to the house. Still, year round, there is a time of night when their home seems to belong to someone else.



The Commodore Inn, formerly located near the intersection of Routes 113 and 244 in Post Mills.

Do you have a ghost story or a witch tale that takes place in Thetford? Please tell us!



Strategic Planning Survey Online

You may recall from Town Meeting and our Spring Newsletter that we are currently involved in a Strategic Planning exercise for the Historical Society, and are interested in your thoughts and ideas. We've put our survey online, and if you haven't completed and returned a paper copy, please take a minute to complete the online version. It's quick, anonymous (unless you share your information) and very helpful to us. The link is on our website (www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org) and will be available through December, 2013.

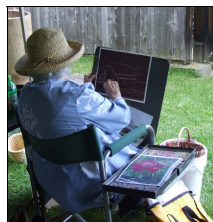
Membership Reminder

We've changed our membership year, which now runs from June 1st through May 31st. Dues received after January 1st of 2013 will pay your membership through May, 2014.

Is your membership current? Give us a call if you're not sure. There is a membership form on our website that's easy to print, fill out and mail in, with your donation. We appreciate your support!

Hughes Barn Museum Wrap-up

To sum up our 2013 Hughes Barn Museum, we'll let photos do the talking. Many thanks to all who visited, volunteered, and participated as a demonstrator. See you next August!



4th Annual Pie Contest Judges

Jennifer Gernhard
Dalia Pagani
Ursula Rudd
Arthur Sharkey

Ice Cream by Joe Deffner



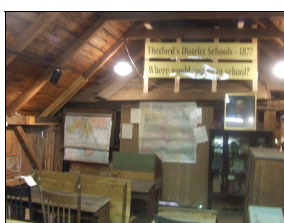
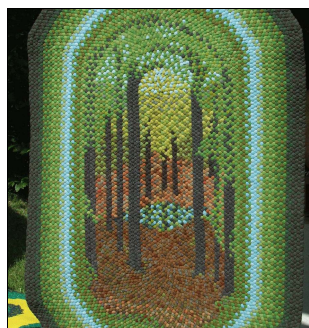
Arts & Crafts Demonstrators

Gail Barton: Painting and Baskets
Olivia Chapman: Painting and Collage
Jessica Eaton: Crochet
Delsie Hoyt: Rug Braiding
Robert Metzler: Letterpress Printing
Jean Munn: Weaving
Sue Rump: Painting
Marshall Van Norden: Wood Turning
Alan Waterman: Blacksmithing



Volunteers

Jennifer Boeri-Boyce
Joe Deffner
Sally Duston & Dean Whitlock
Roberta Howard
Susannah, Neil, and
Nolan Howard
Bob Metzler
Janice Mousley
Jean Munn
Steve Niederhauser
Ted & Judy Peters
Liz Severance
Marshall & Joan Van Norden
Keith Waterman



Apples, Cider & Cheese

Cider Press:
Fairlee Feed & Saddlery

Fiddle Music:
Sadie Wallace-Shelton



Civil War Memorial Event on December 8

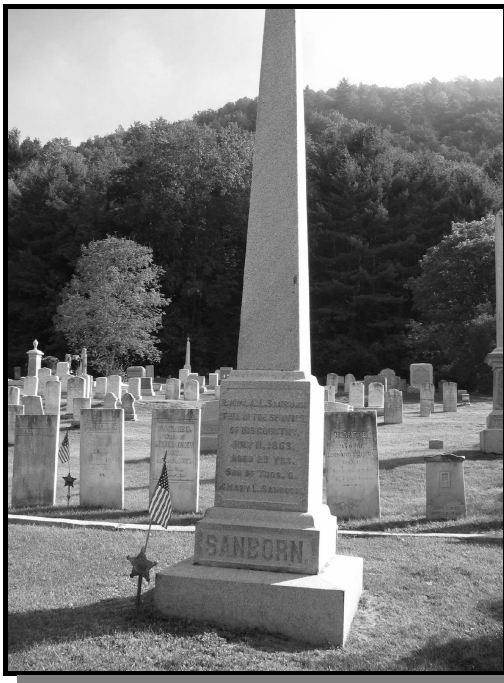
As in other small towns across Vermont, Thetford sent most of their young men off to fight for the Union during the Civil War. Some were drafted, many volunteered. With luck, Thetford's soldiers served their time and returned home to families and loved ones to resume their lives. For a few, their service went above and beyond, and on December 8th, we pay tribute to a Thetford soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice, in the name of freedom.

Alanson Sanborn grew up in Thetford Center, and enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1863, recruiting runaway slaves and free black men to form one of the first Companies of colored infantry. He was soon promoted to Lieutenant in Co. B, 1st USCT, out of Washington, DC. On July 11th, barely a week after battles at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, Lt. Sanborn was marching his new recruits through the streets of Norfolk, VA when he was shot by Dr. David Wright, a well known and respected Norfolk physician. Sanborn died of his wounds, and Wright was charged with his murder, and later hanged. Sanborn's body was temporarily interred in Norfolk, then transported back to Thetford, where a funeral and burial were held on December 8, 1863, in Thetford Center. 150 years later, we will honor Thetford's Civil War soldiers and Alanson Sanborn in particular, with afternoon events on Sunday, December 8th, in Thetford Center. Details are being finalized and will be shared through the schools, on the listserve, and on our website.



Thetford Historical Society
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