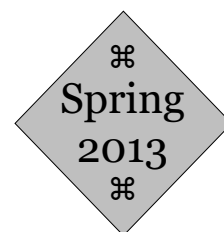

THETFORD

Historical Society



Thetford's Elementary School Turns 50

Edward Peters - THS Trustee

Thetford Students, teachers, parents and community members have been able to enjoy using the Thetford Elementary School (TES) for 50 years now.

Since the initial building was completed and students started to attend there in the spring of 1962, there have been two main additions built including a new gymnasium facility. The grounds have been upgraded on many occasions and most of that work has been accomplished through volunteer efforts by community members.

Before the new school was constructed, Thetford students in Grades 1 through 8 were served in six small district schools located in Post Mills, Union Village, Stevens District, North Thetford, East Thetford and Thetford Center. In the years leading up to the new building different grades were shuffled around town and the Junior High started to attend Thetford Academy to accommodate their

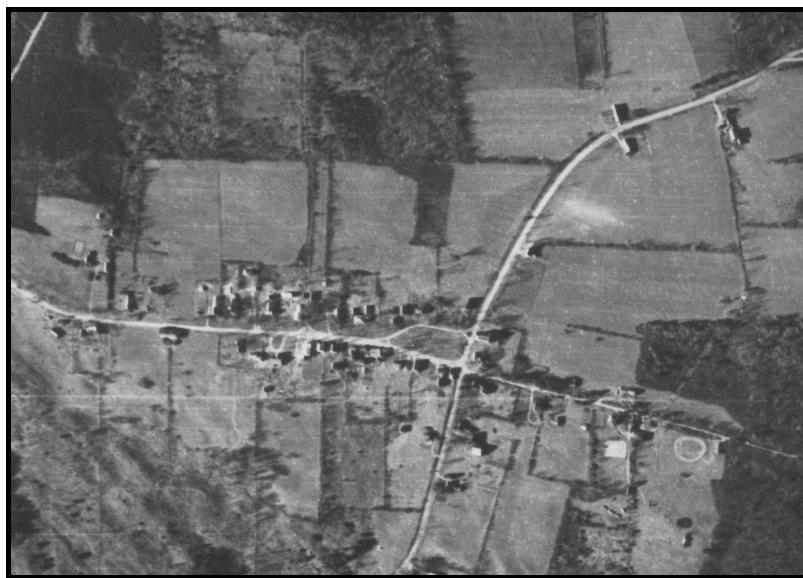
needs. Tuition at Thetford Academy was \$390.00 per year for High School students and \$195.00 per year for Junior High Students.

In earlier years there were as many as 15 designated school districts in Thetford, each with their own building and attended by students of each area in Grades 1 through 8. These are described in

reports by Ruthe Russ, a former teacher at Post Mills, and can be found in the Thetford Historical Society's records.

Claradella Betts was a member of the School Board for 12 years leading up to the building of the new elementary school. She explained that some of the reasons for the consolidation

included: 1. The State was requiring teachers to hold "qualified certificates" that did not allow them to teach more than two grades. 2. The District Buildings were deteriorating and it was difficult to



Thetford Hill, from an aerial photo taken in 1939. (THS Archives)

article continues on page 4

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?
VOLUNTEER!

Contact THS to see how
you can get involved.

Director's Notes

In this issue of the Historical Society's newsletter, we focus on Thetford Hill, bringing you two articles – the first, written by Ted Peters, gives a bit of background on the establishment of the Thetford Elementary School, now some 50 years old.

Bill Thrane is a member of the Historic Preservation Committee, which reviews building projects planned within the Thetford Hill Historic District. They are writing a pamphlet about what they do, which will be available at Town Hall and for download from the Town's website. The Committee also has a number of publications on deposit at THS which may be read in-house.

The photo on the cover is a scan from a nifty aerial photo in our collection, taken by the Army Air Force in 1939. If you look closely, you won't see either the present TES or TA buildings. I'll put this image side by side with a current aerial photo on our Flickr photo page at www.flickr.com/photos/thetfordvt. If you are so inclined, take a few contemporary photos and I'll put them with our historic ones online.

We've finalized our schedule of events at the Barn Museum this summer, and printed our plans on a separate sheet and included it here. Save those dates! We've worked hard to offer something for everyone and hope to see **you** at the Barn Museum.

Coming up in October, our annual meeting will feature Euclid Farnham, speaking about the history of the Tunbridge Fair. Who hasn't enjoyed traveling over the hills in September to enter their prized vegetables and flowers for judging, eat bad-for-you fair food and wander through the fairgrounds and exhibits? Mr. Farnham heads up the Tunbridge Historical Society, and has been involved with the Fair for decades. It should be a fun evening!

On November 23rd the 2nd Annual Thetford Geography Bee will take place at Thetford Academy. Fun for students and adults alike, this year's theme is "Exploring New England". Watch for announcements, and start thinking about forming your team.

A strategic planning questionnaire is included, and I hope that you will take a minute to complete it. Your answers help guide us in terms of events and programs, and provides valuable feedback. Completed forms can be mailed back to us, or dropped off at THS.

Finally, we include a membership envelope, and hope that you will join us in support of our mission to collect and preserve Thetford's history. If you are already a member, thank you!

Martha Howard

Thetford's Historic Preservation Committee

Bill Thrane

Driving up the hill on route 113 from I-91 you enter Thetford Hill and a bygone atmosphere of older homes. Not just old houses, but with a different and historic aura. You are in the Historic District of Thetford Hill's National Register of Historic Places. This district extends from 113 to the Thetford Academy area and includes the First Congregational Church, the Latham Memorial Library and the Thetford Historical Society-all surrounding the original 18th century town common.



Academy Road, from a postcard, ca. 1900 (THS Archives)

Why is it like this? Because in the 1980s the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation considered for nomination that area of Thetford Hill to the National Register of Historic Places. It listed each house and building of an age of 50 years or greater, the majority of which predated the civil war. The nomination's comprehensive study involved considerable research by state architectural historians. Upon completion of the report and its submission to the state committee for approval and then forwarded to the office of the United States Department

of Interior National Park Service, the Thetford Historical Society was officially notified of its entry to the National Register on November 23, 1988.

Subsequently, local people like Jim Fowle organized the Historic Preservation Committee to maintain the district's appearance in accordance with preservation guidelines and the support of its occupants. Today's committee consists of a five member volunteer group made up of people with varying backgrounds related to architecture, construction, history and preservation.

The committee's **MANUAL & GUIDELINES** booklet is being published for distribution to all the district landowners to assist them with any ideas they may have regarding potential home changes. They may also attend a monthly meeting to get a question or two answered. In addition, the committee works with Thetford's Development Review Board and zoning administrator in related property decisions. This includes building permits for new buyers of currently historic homes.

The Thetford Historical Society has copies of several publications dealing with recommended suggestions regarding home improvement and repairs available for review by any Thetford homeowners. In addition, for anyone interested in information about the National Register of Historic Places and their possible eligibility, there is relevant material on how to earn a plaque like the one on the historically registered town hall. More information is also available on the web at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/>.

Thetford Elementary School Turns 50, cont'd

clean and maintain them. 3. It would be an educational advantage to the students to have one teacher per grade. 4. There would be a need for fewer teachers. 5. Health and Safety issues – According to Dr. William Putnam (Health Officer), who inspected the schools annually, there were many health and safety issues at the District Schools. Some did not have drinking water or the water they had was not fit for consumption. None had hot water and hand washing facilities were inadequate. Only the Thetford Center School had flush toilets. The other schools had chemical toilets. Only Union Village had adequate lighting. No schools had proper ventilation and most operated without adequate heating systems. There were no telephones!

Where finances are always an issue when large projects are concerned, Mrs. Betts said that the most difficult obstacle in obtaining the vote for the new school was for the different school districts to give up their schools. She explained it was a very bitter fight and she remembers being threatened on several occasions. Once the vote passed, a few of the schools were given to the communities by the Town, but most were sold to private citizens to help pay school expenses.

The location of the Thetford Elementary School was also an issue that had to be resolved over time. The first proposal had the school located on Thetford Hill, the second moved the location to Thetford Center and the final location that was considered is where the school stands now.

Once the “New” school was built and in operation, School Directors were pleased that each grade could have their own teacher, giving added attention, opportunities, and advantages to the students. Also the finances and efforts could be focused on maintaining one building and its systems and grounds.

In conclusion, I would mention that I enjoyed my experiences in attending two of the District schools in Thetford as well as Thetford Academy. I believe I was prepared well for my post -secondary education. I realize that the consolidated elementary school was necessary at the time it was built and our community has benefitted greatly from the decision to build in 1961.

The Town of Thetford has in the past and continues to benefit greatly from our schools in Town. Our citizens have high expectations for our children’s education and are willing to support the efforts of our educational leaders. Many thanks to all, past and present, who have worked hard to ensure that our students get a good start in life through achieving a good education in our schools.



TA Memories Sought

Do you recall some of the unique details of the original Academy building? If so, Thetford Academy would be grateful for your assistance with a summer student project that would create a digital three-dimensional model of the building, which was destroyed with three other structures by fire in November, 1942.

Steve Niederhauser, who is a social studies teacher at the Academy (and also a THS trustee), leads a class every two years entitled, “Barns, Mills and Mountains”. Students

research a topic of interest that results in a presentation at the end of the course. This year two of his students, Seniors Paul Moses and Owen Marshall, used photographs, drawings and recollections of former students to craft a digital rendering of the building using the Google Sketch Up program. They are refining the project throughout the summer, and would welcome any and all bits of information that might be useful. And if you happen to have an image of the building that could be scanned, especially an interior shot, they’d be delighted! Contact Steve Niederhauser at TA (785-2068), or let us know at THS, and we can put you in touch with Paul and Owen.

Read More About It

Interested in learning more about Thetford Hill and other topics included here? Stop in to the Historical Society.

Eclipse Grange

Manuscript Collection M18

First Congregational Church

The Life of Asa Burton (Biography)

Early Church records and history M71

First Congregational Church (1937)

Gladys Estabrook Photos

3 Boxes of Thetford area images M23

Hanoum Inn

Guest Register 1933-1935 BV58

Historic Structures - Townwide

Thetford Sites & Structures Survey M30

Thetford Academy

First Ledger 1819-1874 BV202

Manuscript Collection 14 Boxes M68

Early Catalogue from 1820

Thetford's District Schools

Ruthe Russ Collection 3 Boxes M1

Ledgers by District BV19-BV36

Thetford Hill Historic District

Manuscript Collection 1 Box M67

Thetford Hill Improvement Society

Executive Council Ledger 1907-1929 BV154

Society Records 2 Boxes M43

Thetford Hill Post Office

Records from 1901-1978 3 Boxes M48

Charles Vaughan

Taxi Service Ledger 1922-1926 BV81

Images

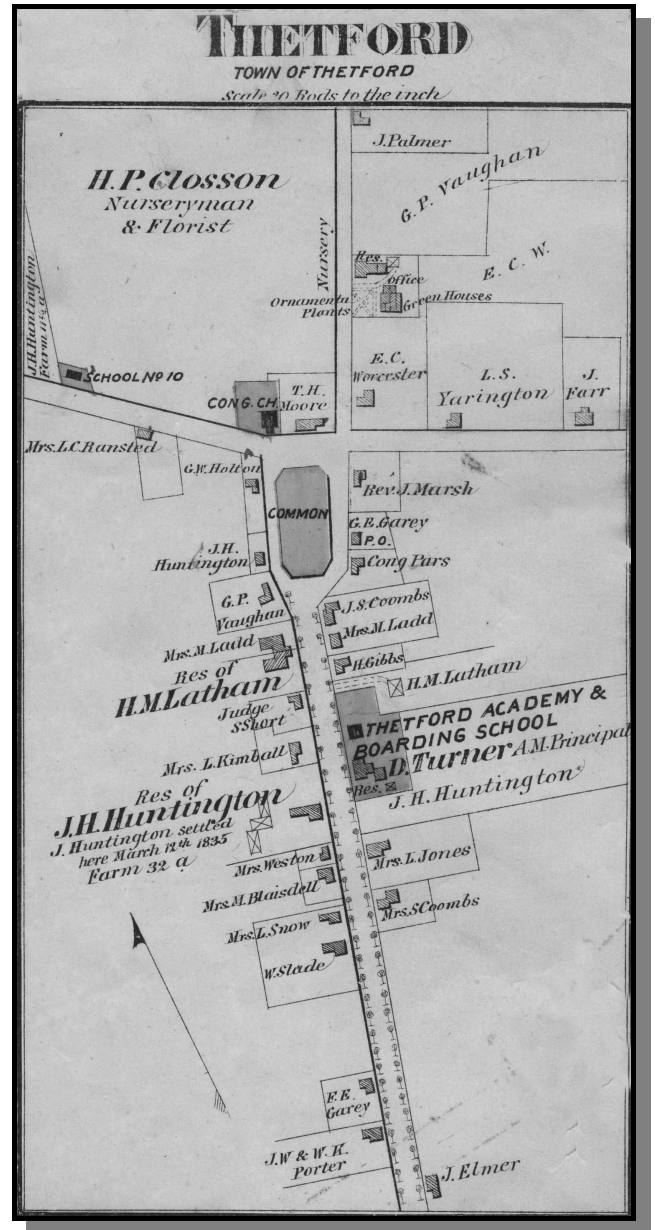
Several file folders of photographs, collections of glass negatives and oversized prints, including many by Clara Sipprell.

THS Publications

Walking Tour of Thetford Hill (available to borrow)

Beloved Village by Charles Hughes

Mills and Villages by Charles Hughes



Map of Thetford Hill, Beers' Atlas, 1877 (THS Archives)

Save The Dates!

August 11, 18, 25

September 1, 8

Hughes Barn Museum

open Sundays 2:00-5:00 pm

Sunday, October 13

5:00 pm

N Thetford Church

THS Annual Meeting

Potluck Supper

Euclid Farnham, speaker

"The Tunbridge Fair"

Saturday, November 23

6:00 pm

Thetford Academy

2nd Annual Geo Bee

Adult and Student Teams

2013 Theme: "Exploring

New England"

173 Enrolled In Thetford Schools Under New Plan

(Valley News, 1959, used with permission)

THETFORD - Thetford schools opened last Wednesday with 173 children enrolled. A new arrangement has been made with Thetford Academy, and the 7th and 8th grades this year will be the first pupils to attend the new Junior High at the Academy. This change has brought about the closing this year of two schools, East Thetford and Rice's Mills. Five schools remain open, with three rooms at Post Mills school. All 6th graders of the town are being transported to this school, with Mrs. Violet Shumway the teacher.

Fourth and 5th grades are being taught by Mrs. Gertrude Clark, with children from Rice's Mills, Union Village, Thetford Center, Thetford Hill and Post Mills enrolled. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades are all Post Mills children and have Mrs. Alice Mason as their teacher. Union Village school has 1st 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades, consisting of pupils from the Union Village and Rice's Mills area. Mrs. Pliny Boutwell is the teacher.

North Thetford school is made up of a 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade comprised of children from East Thetford and North Thetford, with Mrs. Fred Hayward the teacher. Stevens District school is being taught by Mrs. Wilbur McAllister and consists of 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th grades, with children from North and East Thetford and Stevens District. Mrs. Mildred Cook returned as teacher to the Thetford Center school with the first four grades of children from Thetford Hill and Thetford Center.

The children are being transported on the town bus, driven by Floyd Ricker, and three auxiliary vehicles owned by Alfred Smith, Frank Stiles and Mrs. Harold Slack. Part of the Jr. High is being carried on the Academy bus.

Central Elementary School Sought in Thetford Will Cost \$176,000

(Valley News, 1961, used with permission)

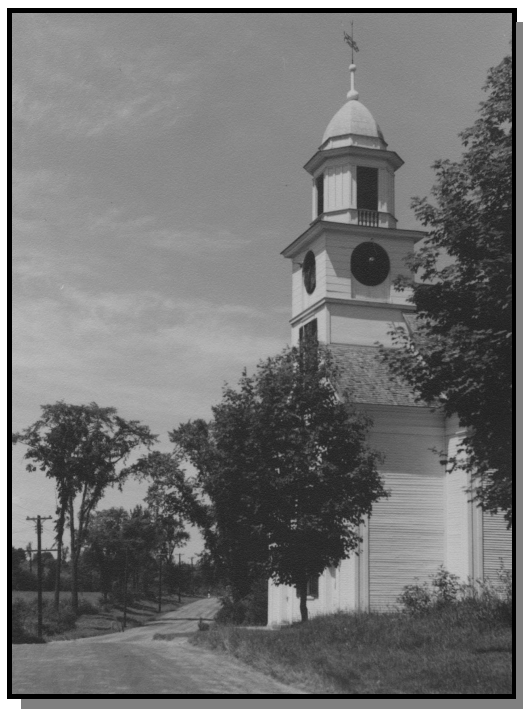
THETFORD - The consolidation of the five small schools here into a new \$ 176,000 seven-room building to be build near Thetford Academy will be asked by the school board at the March town meeting. The move is the culmination of more than ten years of controversy and contention. The decision was made by the board at its

January meeting, and plans for the new building have already been drawn by Brooke Fleck of Hanover.

Mrs. Charles Betts, chairman of the board, said this morning that the new school, if voted by the town, would result on an increase in the school tax rate of only 59 cents. The cost to the town for the new building would be \$ 123,000 including landscaping and other details. The town would be bonded for that amount and the bonds would be amortized over a 20-year period. The remaining \$53,000 would be state aid funds.

The new school would include one room for each of the six grades new being taught in the Thetford school system, and a multi-purpose room. Grades seven and eight would continue to be taught at Thetford Academy.

The five school buildings that will be closed are, with one exception, one-room schools. The Post Mills school has three rooms. In one, all the sixth graders in the district have been concentrated. In the second, grades one, two and three are taught. In the Stevens District School, grades two through five are taught. In the North Thetford school, grades one, two and three are taught. And in the Thetford Center school, grades one through four are taught. They would all be closed if the proposal is passed by the voters. Other members of the school board are Charles Wilcox and Frank Stiles.



*A field where the Elementary School would be - 1942
(Hanoum Albums)*



The First "Fire Maker", Camp Fire Girls, 1912 (THS Archives)

The Camp Fire Girls Began In Thetford in 1912

Camp Hanoum, founded in 1909 by Charles and Charlotte Farnsworth, began as a summer outing for students at Horace Mann Teacher's College in New York. Originally on Houghton Hill Road, Hanoum soon expanded to Mud Pond/Lake Abenaki.

In the early years the girls arrived in town by train and were transported to camp by local hired cars, including those from Charles Vaughan's taxi service. The campers frequented Vaughan's Store on the corner of Academy Road and Route 113, and participated in the Fair held each summer on the

Thetford Hill Common. Campers were a familiar sight to local residents; hiking through the area or canoe camping along the Connecticut River, where it was common for campers to spend the night in local barns or fields. The Hanoum Inn, located in a T A dormitory building south of the Common on Academy Road, also served as local summer lodging for camp visitors. The Inn burned with other Academy buildings in 1942.

The girls were involved in the Thetford Pageant in 1911, and it was after this event that Mrs. Farnsworth pursued her idea for an organization specifically for girls, set around camping. She spoke to the head of the Boy Scouts of America who agreed that there was a need for such an organization, and who encouraged her to continue. She proposed calling her group the "Camp Fire Girls", and Camp Hanoum operated as a Camp Fire camp for several years, before assuming the Farnsworths' format. The Camp Fire program was adopted by Mrs. Luther Gulick, Mr. Farnsworth's sister, the founder in 1905 of the Camp Aloha group on Lake Fairlee and Lake Morey, who is often credited as the founder of Camp Fire.

And in 1916, from *The Mektub*, Hanoum's Newsletter...

'...Dearest of our guests, for her own sake as well as Sallie's, is Sallie's mother. We love to remember the picture of the group under the silver poplar tree as the children listened to the reading of "Understanding Betsy," and enjoyed being allowed to meet Betsy before she has been introduced to the public. The Lake Camp has its picture to remember too, when Mrs. Fisher sat before the big fire, and talked to us about the relief work in France. As a result of the interest she inspired we gave her to take to France with her \$101.07, raised by sacrificing some pleasure or luxury- We sent also \$15.00 for relief work in New York among poor children by Mrs. Fisher's friend, Miss Cleghorn.'

Sallie was Sallie Fisher, and her mother was Vermont author Dorothy Canfield Fisher, who spent several summers at Camp Hanoum just before World War I. While Fisher was at Hanoum she was working on a children's book, and as she would finish each chapter, she would read it aloud to the campers. "Understanding Betsy" would be published in 1917 as *Understood Betsy*, a beloved book about Elizabeth Ann, a young orphan girl who leaves the city to live with her cousins on a Vermont farm. Did Thetford's hills and valleys and the young ladies at Camp Hanoum serve as inspiration for the story of Fisher's Betsy? It's entirely possible. Read it (again) this summer, and see what you think.

Thetford Hill Mystery Photo

Hap Johnson stopped by with the above item in the back of his truck. It was rediscovered in the basement of the First Congregational Church during a recent construction project. It is a long wooden traverse sled – the back runners are fixed and the front runners turn, enabling the occupants to steer, using the attached rope handle. There are traces of yellow, green and red paint left, and the entire object is 10+ feet long! No names or other markings, though. What can you tell us about this sled? Did you ever ride with your friends down over Thetford Hill on this monster? If so, please share – it would have been an amazing ride!



Inside this issue:

Focus on... Thetford Hill

50 years of learning at TES

Thetford Hill Historic District

Thetford Hill in THS Collection

TA's Original Building revisited

Camp Fire Girls

2013 Hughes Barn Museum Info

Strategic Planning Survey

Membership Information

2013 Annual Meeting

2nd Annual Geography Bee

Thetford Historical Society

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