
THETFORD

Historical Society

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Summer
2014
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Woods and Estey Are Alive and Well

by Martha Howard

You've no doubt supported local organizations and their events and wondered, "what did they actually do with the money they raised?" Here's what the Historical Society did with our annual Thetford Geography Bee proceeds, which were earmarked for projects at the Hughes Barn Museum.

If you have visited the Museum, you'll recall the array of items on display, documenting life in Thetford's earlier days. Many of the items were collected by Charles and Fannie Hughes, who recognized their importance for future generations to view and enjoy. The collection, supplemented by donations from townsfolk, became the Hughes Barn Museum. The property itself, with the large barn, came from Emma Coombs, another early supporter of the Society. It's fitting, then, that this year's preservation efforts involve both the Hugheses and Miss Coombs, and that it results in music, Mr. Hughes' great love.

For years, we've had a reed organ in our church display upstairs in the barn, though nobody had ever heard it play. In an interview with Don Fifield, Charles Hughes identified it as Emma Thurston's, from her home in Wilder, given to her niece, Emma Coombs. It had served as a home for mice and other critters, who had generally made a mess of it. Underneath the mess however, was a gem - a Woods parlor organ. Wouldn't it be wonderful to get it working again, and offer concerts when the Museum was open?



Last summer on one of our Open Sundays, a gentleman stopped by with a request. Would we please rescue an Estey organ that he'd just removed from a Thetford house cleanout? It was too nice to end up in a landfill, he said. After determining that the house in question was Charles Hughes' place in Sawney Bean, and remarking on the serendipity that brought this man to the Hughes Museum, we agreed. Thus, restoration of the two reed organs was undertaken, with the expertise of Bruce Stevens, owner of 1,001 Keys in Wells River, who moved the instruments last fall to his workspace to repair.

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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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Are You a MEMBER of THS?

It's Easy!

Use the enclosed envelope
to join or renew.

We appreciate your support!



"In The Good Old Days" (First Road Machine Owned By The Town)

Picture taken in 1889 on Thetford Hill in front of the Asa Poore Farm, now owned by George Sayre. The men are Almon Aldrich, William Cook, and E. M. Fullington.

The Good Old Days

Who doesn't love then and now comparisons, or in this case, then and then? This nostalgic photo was printed in the 1941 Town Report. Did the caption convey a desire to go back to simpler, less costly times? Here are some items from Town Meeting held in 1941, which provide clues to the overall mood:

Article 3: Shall licenses for the sale of malt and vinous beverages be granted in this town? Voted -Yes: 57, No: 98. Shall spirituous liquors be sold in this town? Yes: 39, No: 104.

Article 5: Voted - \$ 1.55 school tax.

Article 8: Voted to appropriate \$ 1,000.00 to TA.

Article 9: Voted \$ 50.00 for Town Library.

Article 11: Voted - Town Tax of \$ 2.10, Highway Tax of \$.35.

(The report gives the Grand List for 1941 as \$ 7,087.51)

Article 15: Voted-Not to appropriate \$ 50.00 for installing lights in the Stevens District School.

William Bacon was Road Commissioner in 1941. He filed this report:

<i>Total (Expenses for road repairs)</i>	<i>\$ 2,513.11</i>
<i>35 cents on Grand List</i>	<i>\$ 2,486.37</i>
<i>Rebate from State</i>	<i>26.50</i>
	<i>\$ 2,512.87</i>
<i>Overdrawn</i>	<i>.24</i>

How good were those Good Old Days, vs. 1941? In 1889, the Town's Grand List was \$5,625.90, and Town and Highway Tax rates were 50 cents and 15 cents, respectively. Highway spending for 1889 was \$1,259.79, and taxes raised were \$843.88. How was the town able to pay for half again as much in road repairs? The year began with a surplus of \$1,027.74, and additional revenues were realized, including sale of oxen for \$105.00, and a scraper for \$2.50. Even with the extra spending, the fiscal year ended with cash in the treasury of \$410.61.



Parade at the Thetford Hill Fair

Hughes Barn Museum Open Sundays

It's a summer tradition - Open Sundays at the Hughes Barn Museum! For five consecutive Sundays, beginning August 10, we'll open our buildings for you and feature some fun, live demonstrations as well. We've put our entire schedule on a single sheet for reference - won't you join us? More information is on our website and posted periodically on Thetford's ListServe.

Photo Scanning at Hill Fair

The Historical Society will be open on Saturday, July 26th, during the Thetford Hill Fair. Our scanning equipment will be set up, and we would love to add your Thetford photos to our archives! Your images will be returned, along with digital copies for you on a CD.

Have you've enjoyed these images of Thetford summers from years ago? We can share them with you because someone thought to share them with us. We would especially like your images from 1930 forward. They're even more valuable if you can date your photos, and identify the people and places in them.

Join The Flames on August 2nd

Join us on Saturday, August 2nd as we kick off **Thetford History Month** and our **Hughes Barn Museum** season with live music and dancing at the Pavillion, in East Thetford. Years ago the Pavillion was THE place to be on a weekend night - a band, friends from area towns, and plenty of high spirits made for memorable evenings.

Our dance, from 7:30 to 10:30, is alcohol-free and family friendly, with snacks and drinks available. Admission is by donation. Where's the Pavillion? It's that red building just beyond the tracks on Pavillion Road, in East Thetford. Our event will feature a local group, **The Flames**, with an extensive playlist of dance-able tunes from the '50s and '60s forward. More info on the event, the band, and the venue on our website.

A Recipe for Switchel

(from the Jessie Baldwin Collection)

There were many variations of this drink, which was widely used by men working in the hay fields. Here is the basic recipe used in my family for many generations.

- ½ cup vinegar
- 1 cup sugar (maple sugar in the early days when it was cheaper than white sugar, and brown sugar in later years)
- 2 tsp. ginger, or more, to taste
- 1 qt. cold water

Add a large piece of ice chopped from an ice cake from the ice house and carefully washed to remove all the sawdust in which the ice cakes were packed.

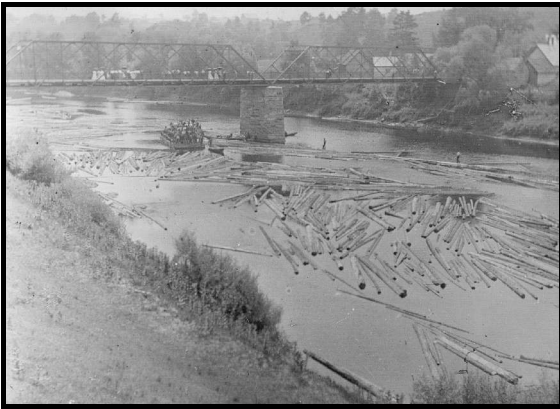
Place all in pail with cover, and carry quickly to the men working in the hay field.

Sometimes uncooked oats were added to 'cool the blood'.



Maynard Ilsley haying - 1940s (THS Archives)

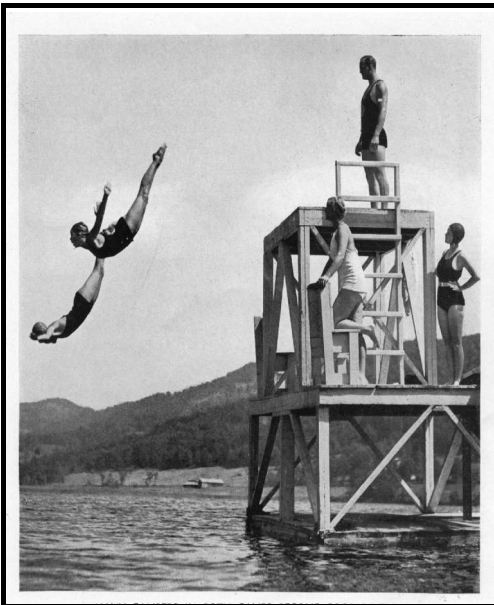
CELEBRATING SUMMER IN TIMES PAST



Watching the last log drive from N. Thetford Bridge



Botsford auction with Bill Godfrey



Learning to dive on Lake Fairlee



Morris Campground, East Thetford



Old Home Day Rummage Sale in Thetford Center



Family outing in Post Mills

Woods and Estey, *cont'd*

I visited Bruce's shop in mid-May, and it's a remarkable building; full of pieces, parts, and full-sized keyed instruments in various stages of restoration. Our Estey organ was right inside the door, and it just shone. The black walnut case had been cleaned and polished, the keys were now a creamy ivory color (made of celluloid, a synthetic material similar to Bakelite). The green, velvety fabric on the two candle or lamp shelves on either side (for illuminating one's sheet music) was new, as was the silk fabric behind the case's fretwork, protecting the inside from dust while allowing sound to escape. Did it sound as good as it looked? Oh yes! Bruce sat down and demonstrated the workings of the foot pedals and various stops, which added musical effects to the notes he played. Bruce was able to repair or replace everything except a tiered shelf which would have sat on the top. Even the original serial tag was intact inside, and it identified this organ as having been made in Brattleboro, Vermont, by the Estey Organ Company.

We asked a few of Mr. Hughes' friends if they could recall the origin of the Estey organ; if it had been one of his local auction finds. No one knew for certain. The Hughes manuscript collection at THS contains a number of his short stories, and the collection guide includes a cross reference to stories that Mr. Hughes had written for *Behind The Times*. "Piano in the Parlor", from 1998, may hold the answer.

"...I did not have a reed organ of my own till much later. My wife Fannie and I were living in the Sawnee Bean Farm. Our nearest neighbor down hill was Arthur Smith who lived in the stone house. One morning, we heard an unusual noise. I looked out of the window. There was Arthur, the old horse and cart, and in the cart was a reed organ. Arthur remarked that he would rather give the organ to me than have it broken up for kindling. Suiting action to words he proceeded to move the organ indoors. Now that was a friendly act, but I knew that the Smiths also had a smaller reed organ. He told me that when there was a party in the Sawnee Bean region that they would put this little organ on a sled and bring it with them to supply music for the party. That was the organ I wanted but how could I say "take the big organ back and bring me the little one?" I found that I couldn't do this. I still have the big organ but Arthur Smith no longer lives in the stone house."

The Woods, smaller than the Estey, is made of black walnut with lovely, burlled walnut insets in the case. The fabric accents are a violet red, and these keys are ivory. Though it looked bad initially, Stevens was sure that the Woods could be saved. The soundboard was intact and the case was tight, even after many years in an uncontrolled climate. The reeds, made of brass, were removed and cleaned with Lysol, and in Stevens' words, "they came right back". Everything was reassembled, the case was touched up with new paint, and then it was ready to play. I asked Bruce who would have owned an instrument like this. He replied that it was likely owned by a person of means, as this was a 'Cadillac' of parlor organs. The Estey would have been equally suited for home or a church, as it has three sets of reeds and a loud sub-bass. Pipe organs common today appeared in churches after the 1870s.



To learn more about reed organs online, visit <http://bit.ly/1sg6knC> for a thorough explanation of the workings of these instruments. For a quick field trip, travel south to Brattleboro to the Estey Organ Museum (esteyorganmuseum.org/) some Saturday or Sunday during the summer and fall.

Be sure to join us on **August 10th**, our first Open Sunday at the Hughes Barn Museum, when Bruce Stevens will be on hand to talk about the restoration project, and give a concert on both instruments.



"Birthplace", by Richard Alden Burt (THS Collection)

THS at Vermont History Expo Features Richard Alden Burt

2014 is a History Expo year, and the theme was "Artists and Artisans". The Historical Society was a participant, and our exhibit featured the work of Thetford's Richard Alden Burt.

Richard Burt was born in Hanover, NH in 1921, and grew up in Rice's Mills in the Wallace homestead (shown left, which burned in 1933). He was an Army Air Force veteran who received his education and training in art at Vesper George School, Plymouth State College, and Dartmouth College. Burt taught all ages: at Lebanon High School, Cardigan Mountain School, Plymouth State, and through an Extension program for teachers of art in New Hampshire.

Proficient in a number of mediums, Burt's body of work (and our exhibit) included oils, watercolors, pen and ink, woodcut prints, pencil sketches, and book illustrations.

If you visited us at the History Expo, thank you for making the trek to Tunbridge! If you missed the Expo, we hope to exhibit Burt's work again in town, later this summer or fall. If you have a memory of Richard Burt and/or are fortunate to have some of his artwork yourself, please be in touch! We would love to include you in our local event. Watch the Thetford ListServe or our website for more details.

Lucky 13 (Colonies)

Heads-up for Saturday, November 22nd, when we will again sponsor the Thetford Geography Bee. It's a fun format - multiple choice questions are asked of three-member teams (in both youth and adult divisions). A tally of correct answers is kept, and at the end of the Bee, the winning teams get to choose from some really great prizes.

Is 13 your lucky number? We hope so! This year's questions are all about the **13 Original Colonies**. It's never too early to start preparing. Team sign-up sheets and sponsorship forms will be available soon on our website.

Thetford Historical Society
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