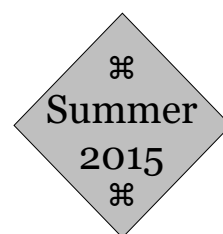

THETFORD

Historical Society



Mary Hosford and the Beginning of Co-education

Steve Niederhauser - THS Trustee

Mary Hosford (Fisher) from Thetford, Vermont was the first woman in the western world to receive a college bachelor's degree. This is a legitimate and accepted fact, although it must certainly be known that she was alphabetically the first of the three young women to walk across the platform to be handed their diplomas at the Oberlin Collegiate Institute (as Oberlin College was called from 1833 to 1850) on August 25, 1841. The other two young women were Elizabeth Prall of New York City and Caroline Rudd of Huntington, Connecticut. Our questions are: how did a girl from our town end up in the wilderness of Ohio to become one of "the Dauntless Three," as they were called, and what were the circumstances that led to these three women receiving college degrees that were precisely equivalent to those received by men? As historian, Frances J. Hosford (no relation), pointed out in a 1926 reference to this event, "there were, as there always are, stars before the sunrise."

Mary Hosford was born in North Thetford on June 24, 1821 and was the granddaughter of Elihu Hosford, who, along with three brothers, their

families, and their mother, came to Thetford from Hebron, Connecticut in 1765. Joseph Hosford's tombstone in North Thetford states that his was the fifth family to arrive. Mary B. Slade (1871 - 1966),

Thetford's most distinguished historian, tells us, "The Hosford family was one of the best families to come.... Many of the Hosfords were gifted - and there were preachers, musicians, doctors, and teachers in the later generations."

The third child of William Hosford and Linda Ellis of Keene, NH, Mary most likely walked to the 2nd District school in North Thetford from her house on Clay Road. It's easy to imagine that she looked forward to attending Thetford Academy which opened its doors to young scholars of both sexes just two years before she was born, but an event took place near her eleventh birthday that was to precipitate a strong connection

between the town of Thetford and Oberlin College and one that was to send Mary Hosford on a different, more extraordinary, path.



Mary Hosford Fisher, in an undated photo

Cont'd on pg 3

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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Director's Notes

August is Thetford History Month! Celebrate with a visit to our Barn Museum on Route 113. A complete schedule of events is included, and more information is available on our website.

In September, the Society will again sponsor a dance featuring *The Flames*, at the Pavilion in East Thetford. Last year's dance was great fun; try to attend this year, if you can.

October is our annual meeting, and at press time, our details have not yet been finalized. Stay tuned, as we're likely to follow our typical format again, which includes a pot luck supper and a speaker.

November means Geography, and we'll again host a Geo Bee on the 6th, at Thetford Academy. Details on page 7 here, and on our website.

Finally, we hope you'll consider a membership with the Historical Society; be it new or a renewal. Memberships support our programming and outreach efforts. Our goal is to preserve and share Thetford's history, and there really are some great stories to tell.

Martha Howard
Director, Thetford Historical Society

In Memoriam

Earlier this year, the Historical Society lost a dedicated and valued trustee, Elizabeth "Liz" Severance, who passed away after a brief illness.

Liz joined the board as our Treasurer in the fall of 2012. In addition to these duties, she was a active member of the THS program committee, including events at the Barn Museum. Liz typically showed up early, stayed late, and was willing to do most any task, to see that an event went well.

Liz's favorite activity, though, was gardening. Working with her husband, Cy, the Severance gardens on Route 5 flourished. The Society will remember Liz's generous spirit with a flower garden at the Barn Museum, to be installed next spring. Please be in touch if you would like to be involved.

Mary Hosford and the Beginnings of Co-education, cont'd

In June of 1832, James K. Shipherd, a twenty-two year old junior at Middlebury College, was appointed by the trustees of Thetford Academy to be its newest principal (also called preceptor or head teacher). Many preceptors of academies at this time were, in fact, scholarly and particularly devout college students who wished to interrupt their studies for a year or two to earn some money and perhaps enhance their resumes. (Early college graduates usually entered the professions of law, medicine, or religion and were rarely moved to become secondary school teachers.) Shipherd was certainly known to Thetford Academy because his father served on the Board of Trustees of Middlebury College along with both Asa Burton and Judge Buckingham of Thetford. James Shipherd, as it happened, was the younger brother of Rev. John J. Shipherd, who was at this time busy being the founder of Oberlin College which was first conceived as a Christian colony of "latter-day Puritan farmers." John Shipherd's main purpose at Oberlin was to train gospel ministers and pious school teachers who would then go forth to save pioneer souls as the West was settled. Through unrelenting effort and good connections, John Shipherd, with a partner (Philo P. Steward), was able to establish a three-tiered educational system, and on December 3, 1833, first offered sophisticated college level courses in a smoke-filled clearing in a dense, swampy forest in the Western Reserve of Ohio.

John Shipherd visited Thetford in the late winter or early spring of 1833 during an extended trip to churches of New York and New England. The charismatic, young Rev. Shipherd's purpose was to raise money, recruit qualified colonists, and in the case of Thetford, to visit with his brother, James, with whom he was close. The exact date of his visit isn't clear but we know he preached at Asa Burton's newly moved and reconfigured church, raised \$150 from its members, and persuaded several families and individuals of Thetford and Lyme to pull up stakes and leave for Oberlin where the first colonist (Peter Pindar Pease from Stockbridge, Massachusetts) was just at that time (March, 1833) cutting down the first tree. We know for sure that two particularly religious men and their families successfully completed the arduous journey from Thetford to Oberlin in the spring of '33: Thomas Porter Turner and William Hosford.

We know the Hosfords (including four children) arrived in Oberlin in the third week of May, a month before Mary's twelfth birthday. The family most certainly traveled by wagon to Albany, by the Erie Canal (completed in 1825) to Buffalo, by steamship to Cleveland, by wagon to Elyria, Ohio, and, finally, by smaller wagon they endured the last ten muddy miles on to Oberlin where a few small log cabins stood amongst virgin forest. Once settled in, Mary's father quickly became an important addition to the colony, becoming moderator and school district director, and he traveled back to Cleveland that fall to procure a steam engine to drive a community saw mill.

Thomas Porter Turner, an accomplished house builder, was originally from Lyme but moved to Thetford Hill for its employment opportunities; several of his houses still stand, including the 1825 brick Federal at the south end of the village, owned today by the McConnaugheys. It is believed that Porter Turner (as he was known) also supervised the moving of the Congregational Church and the construction of its vestibule and steeple in 1830. Once in Oberlin, Turner, using student labor, constructed a number of college buildings, and between 1842 and 1844, he supervised the construction of the Oberlin Meeting House (The First Church) which was, at the time, the largest building west of the Appalachians and it, like some of his work in Thetford, still stands.

concludes on page 6

A Few Bits of Lake Fairlee History

The following excerpts come from Findings of Fact in a Vermont Chancery Court case from 1942, regarding lowering of the water level of Lake Fairlee. They provide a snapshot of activities around the Lake at that time, as well as recent (and not so recent) history of the Lake. All photos and the complete text of the court document are in the THS archives.

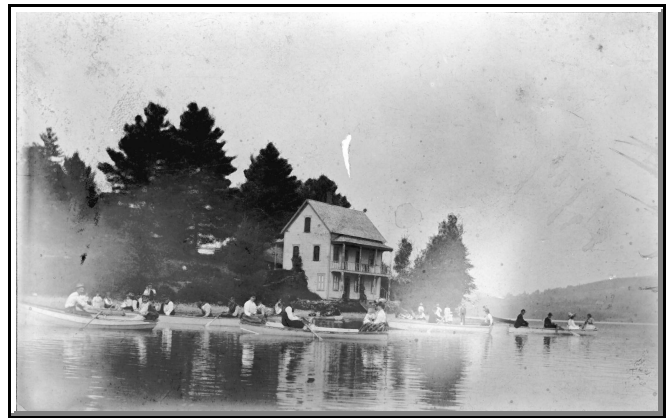
Lake Fairlee is a natural body of water situated in the Towns of Thetford, Fairlee and West Fairlee. It is approximately 2 to 2½ miles in length, approximately 1700 acres in area, and it is 676 feet above sea level. The watershed of the Lake is about 17½ square miles.



South end of Lake Fairlee, area which would become Lakeshore and West Fairlee Roads. Just visible to the right is a boathouse on the edge of the water.

There were no private homes or summer cottages, boys' or girls' summer recreational camps, hotels or adult recreational camps about the shores of the Lake until after 1900. In 1907, Camp Billings was founded and in 1911 Camp Quinibek commenced operation. [In addition] there are now on the shores of the Lake or in close proximity thereto, the following boys' or girls' summer recreational camps: Aloha, Lochearn, Passumpsic, Wyoda, Keywaydin, and Neshobe.. . Shanty Shane and Idle Pine Lodge are adult camps or hotels, and are also located on the shores of the Lake. There are 35 to 40 private summer homes or cottages about the Lake.

"Community Point", so called, is situated on the southwest shore of the Lake, and is owned and controlled by an association of public spirited citizens and is open to the public during the summer months. At this location, bathing, picnicing, and boating are permitted without charge. Camping and trailer facilities are also available and for which a small charge is made.



An early glass plate image of the boathouse above, with a number boaters enjoying the water.

Lake Fairlee is a very productive lake for purpose of fish propagation and fish food. It is better adapted to such species as Bass and Perch than it is to species inhabiting deep, cold water such as Lake Trout and Lake Salmon. The waters of the Lake are saturated with oxygen in the warmer strata, but deficient in the deep water. That part of the Lake best adapted for propagation of fish is the margin or shoal areas; these are the areas supporting aquatic vegetation and spawning beds. From 1932 to 1939 inclusive, the State Fish and Game Department stocked Lake Fairlee with great numbers of Black Bass fingerlings, Pike Perch fry, Black Bass adults and Bull Head fingerlings.

The outlet of Lake Fairlee is situated at the southwesterly end of the Lake. Unless obstructed, water flows through this outlet southerly and westerly to a point where it empties into the Ompompanoosuc River. The Ompompanoosuc flows generally in a southerly direction and eventually flows into the Connecticut River. There is a dam at the outlet of Lake Fairlee, which dam is approximately 300 feet southwesterly of a highway bridge, which crosses said outlet. There are no mills or manufacturing plants at the dam site at this time, nor have there been any there for many years. There is a second dam known as the Kimball dam about one-fourth of a mile below the point where the waters from Lake Fairlee join with the waters of the Ompompanoosuc River. Still further below on the Ompompanoosuc River and about one to two miles below the dam at the outlet of Lake Fairlee, there is a third dam. There is no penstock or sluiceway from the dam at the Lake outlet to either the Kimball dam or the Post Mills dam, or from the Kimball dam to the Post Mills dam.



Stone Dam at Kimball-Star Mills, 1892.

LAKE VIEW
FAIRLEE LAKE, VERMONT

The Lake

For real rest and recreation there is nothing that quite equals a trip to Fairlee Lake and a stop at the Lake View.

The cool, pure air—the invigorating lake breezes—the inviting pine groves—and excellent cuisine all combine to make life at the Lake

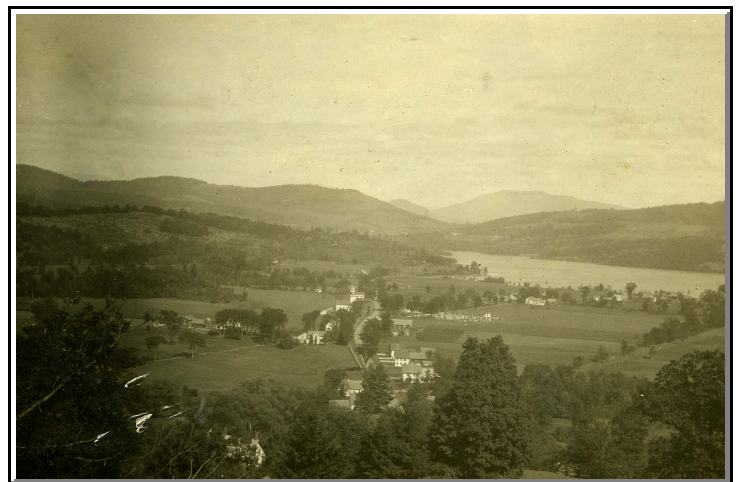
View a round of continual enjoyment.

The Lake is large in area, picturesque in conformation, and with waters of crystalline purity, its serated shores are indented with the most romantic coves and harbors and is practically inclosed by tiers of green hills.

From an advertisement for the Lake View Inn

Lake Fairlee is a glacial lake that was formed by glacial action. The valley in which Lake Fairlee is situated was in existence prior to the glacial period. During that period a sheet of ice came down from the north and a tongue of it occupied the valley. As the glacier melted and receded, glacial debris was deposited. The deposit dammed up the valley and thus the Lake was formed. At the time the Lake was formed a huge sand plain covered the present outlet valley between the dam and the Lake to a depth of 10 feet or more in places. The glacial age lasted from 800,000 to 1,000,000 years and the glacier melted and receded from this part of New England about 25,000 years ago.

By process of erosion, said channel gradually became deeper and the water level of the Lake became lower until the waters of the Lake found the bedrock on which the present dam is situated. When the stream reached the highest part of the rock at the south end of the dam, it was deflected to the north along the pitch of the ledge running from south to north. Any deposit which may have laid to the north along said ledge was easily moved material and the stream gradually cut into it from the south along the sloping pitch of the ledge to the north. The curved bank lying north of the dam is a typical meander scarp and indicates that the stream in post-glacial times and prior to the erection of any dam, crossed the ledge at a point northerly of the present north end of the dam.



Post Mills Plain, and the Lake beyond.

Concludes on page 7

Mary Hosford, cont'd from page 3

The Oberlin Collegiate Institute by 1834 had three departments of instruction: Preparatory (similar to a high school for both sexes), the Female Department, and the Collegiate Department. Oberlin also provided a three-year theological course for college graduates who felt called to the ministry. That women were educated in the same institution that included a college for men and the fact that some of the young women attended classes with young men in the Collegiate Department were both innovations in American education and created the first instance of higher learning co-education in the United States and elsewhere. In addition, women ate meals at the same tables with men but, of course, lived in a separate dormitory. The academic requirements of the Female Department were far less stringent than those of the Collegiate Department because it was still generally believed that women did not possess the “mental strength” of men and that strenuous studies could cause exhaustion and even serious physical ailments. For instance, the Women’s Department required a little Greek but no Latin or Hebrew; it required algebra but not trigonometry.

Graduates of the Female Department received no degree. The Collegiate Department’s curriculum, on the other hand, was originally modeled on that of Yale’s but included many difficult topics not taught at Yale such as Hebrew poetry, anatomy and physiology, the science and art of sacred vocal music, botany, and Milton. There were no majors, no electives, and no grades. One either passed or failed each course.

In May of 1834, when Mary Hosford was twelve and had been living in Oberlin with her family less than a year, she enrolled in the Preparatory Department, and a year and a half later she was registered as a student in the Female Department for the 1835 - 36 academic year. When Mary was sixteen (in 1837) she and three other young women were listed as members of the freshman class in the Collegiate Department. One of the four, Mary Kellogg of Jamestown, New York, subsequently dropped out although she did receive a B.A. a few years after her original classmates did. These three young women completed their studies and made history on Commencement Day in 1841.

- End of Part I – Part II will appear in our next newsletter -

Geography Bee Returns in November



It’s an event that’s as much fun to plan as it is to present. We’re looking forward to this year’s Geography Bee, covering the ***Connecticut River: Source to Sea.***

How well do you know YOUR valley? Questions, in multiple choice format, will cover all aspects of the geography of the Connecticut River and its tributaries. Keeping with our past format, there will be an adult division and a youth division, with teams made up of three members.

This year’s event will be held on Friday, November 6th at 7:00 pm, at Thetford Academy. Watch for announcements and sign up information, coming soon. And in the meantime, for your teams and start studying your Connecticut River geography!

Lake Fairlee History, cont'd

There are three channels in the stream bed, just westerly and on the downstream side of the dam, all of which show glacial action and water erosion. The southernmost channel was the first one formed by water action and is of a higher elevation than the middle channel, which was formed by water action at a later time than the southernmost channel. The northernmost channel was formed by water action at a later time than the other two channels and is of a lower elevation than the other two.

All three channels were in existence prior to 1797*, and prior to the erection of any dam or artificial obstruction at the outlet... A dam acts as a settling basin and therefore, none of these three channels could have been water eroded after the erection of a dam, because there can be no erosion of a rock by water unless the water contains tools such as sand.

**1797 refers to the date of an act of the Vermont Legislature granting Aaron Post "the liberty of raising the waters of Fairlee Lake, so-called" for a dam and mill sites, giving the village its name.*

Lake Fairlee Scenes... What's Changed?



Publications for Sale at THS

<u>Author</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Price</u>
Abbott, Collamer	Green Mountain Copper	\$ 8.00
Bacon, Robert	Register of Persons Buried in the Cemeteries of Thetford, VT 1768 - 1976	\$ 5.00
Baldwin, Jessie	History and Folklore of Post Mills, VT	\$ 5.00
Brown, Robert	Thetford Center Covered Bridge (1997)	\$ 8.00
Brown, Robert	Reconstruction of the Covered Bridge at Union Village (2002)	\$ 8.00
Brown, Robert	Thetford Covered Bridges (2007)	\$ 8.00
Burton, Asa	The Life of Asa Burton, Minister in Thetford, VT 1779-1836, written by himself	\$ 8.00
Hughes, Charles	Beloved Village (Thetford Hill)	\$ 5.00
Hughes, Charles	Mills and Villages	\$ 10.00
Latham, Charles	A Short History of Thetford	\$ 5.00
Latham, Charles	Map of Town of Thetford, VT 1858-1960	\$ 5.00
Lawson, Kenneth	For Christ and Country - Biography of Gustavus Loomis	\$ 10.00
Slade, Mary B.	Thetford Academy's First Century	\$ 10.00
Thetford Hist. Society	Fifty for 250 - An Anthology of Thetford's History 1761-2011	\$ 15.00

We will also have these available at our Barn Museum this summer.

Also available to *borrow* from THS - Walking Tours of Thetford Hill and Thetford Center - a great family activity!

Thetford Historical Society
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