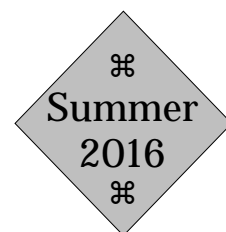

THETFORD

Historical Society



The Education of Mary Hosford - Part II

Steve Niederhauser - THS Trustee



Mary Hosford Fisher, in an undated photo

The first part of this article, published in the Summer 2015 newsletter of the Thetford Historical Society, attests that the first woman in the United States (and beyond) to receive a bona fide college bachelor's degree was Mary Hosford (Fisher) who was born and raised nearly to the age of twelve in North Thetford, Vermont. Already a third generation Thetfordian, Mary joined the westward migration with her parents and siblings in the spring of 1833, traveling the Erie Canal, by steamboat most of the length of Lake Erie, and finally by wagon down a muddy path to Oberlin, Ohio, arriving only months after the first tree there was felled. Just as her grandparents had been among the first European descended families to break ground in Thetford, Mary and her family were one of the first few families to settle Oberlin. These pioneers intended to start a college that would produce educated and moral pastors and teachers for the new west.

By the 1830s, attitudes toward the education of women were changing. Several secondary school academies in the northeast had begun admitting girls. Asa Burton, the widely respected pastor of the Thetford Church, for instance, had insisted that Thetford Academy from its beginning in 1819 be open to young women and indeed his daughter, Mercy, was among its first students. The founder of Oberlin College, John J. Shipherd, his partner, Philo P. Steward, and many other progressive educational leaders of that time believed that women should have post secondary educations but few, if any, thought that that education should include a bachelor's degree that was the equivalent of those received by men. For example, Steward wrote in 1837, "I believe that there is no other way to secure success in our great moral enterprises, than to make prevalent the right kind of female education." The right kind of education for women was to result in "the elevation of female character" in order to improve society through the proper moral education of children both at home and school and, as one educationalist added, women "might instruct in schools and release men to occupations for which they alone are qualified."

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

THS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President: Marshall VanNorden
V. Pres. Steve Niederhauser
Secretary: Roberta Howard
Treasurer: Sarah Clarke

Trustees

Jennifer Boeri-Boyce
Joe Deffner
Sally Duston
Susanna French
Rick Hoffman
Bob Metzler
Tara Pacht
Ted Peters
Karl Tilden

Emeritae

Barbara Condict
Caroline Cressman Riggs
Martha Wiencke
Lilla Willey

Director: Martha Howard

Thetford Historical Society

16 Library Road
PO Box 33
Thetford, VT 05074

802-785-2068
thethist@sover.net

www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org
www.facebook.com/thetfordhistoricalsociety
www.flickr.com/thetfordvt

How You Can Make History

August is Thetford History Month, for it was in August, 1761 that the town's Charter was signed. Can you believe that our 250th was five years ago? This year, we're again asking for your help to celebrate.

As we prepared our Expo exhibit on electric power in Thetford, we noted significant gaps in our photos. Electricity dates to about 100 years ago, thus it should have been easy to find lots of materials in our archives. Not so! We do have many photographs with certain houses and people well represented, but some subjects from 1900 to present are sparse. Photography was popular in the 1910s and '20s, so why were there not more useable images? Here's what we found when we searched through that era:

1. Lots of postcards of street scenes. These are great, but are generally not dated. Timing is often a guess, based on what is (and isn't) in the photo. It was also common to turn a photograph into a postcard which was then mailed. If there's a legible postmark that will narrow down the date, but only if the card was sent shortly after the photo was taken.

2. Nameless persons in photographs. Unless it's included with an identified group or family, these often lovely images are just that. It's interesting to look at clothing styles or local buildings or how the landscape has changed, but as far as the people in the photos, often the faces go un-named.

3. Our personal favorite/frustration - cryptic notations, such as "*our favorite spot*", or "*the best one of me*", or "*the three of us with our dog, Shep.*" We've all done it, written something that's meaningful at the time, but 10, 50, or 100 years from now, will it make sense? Photos and memorabilia outlast people, and when you are researching a story from a century ago, these bits of information that were saved become invaluable.

So what can you do? Get out there and make some history! Capture images of the 113 project, potholes and all. Take pictures at Treasure Island, the Thetford Hill Fair, or the Post Mills Beanhole Supper. Photograph life - Fun Runs at T.A., picnics, or working in your garden. No matter how it feels today, believe me - people in the future *will* be interested in you; what you did and what you photographed, especially something as life-altering as bringing electricity to a small Vermont town.

Or maybe you've already collected those "I'll get to them someday" boxes of Thetford pictures and ephemera. Take a minute to write about the people and places in your images before you forget, or before there's nobody left who'd remember. And if you're contemplating disposal, please - before you toss it - share your history with us, which in turn shares it with future generations. We're pretty sure that the Number 4 reason for scarce materials is, "That stuff was thrown away. It wasn't historical. Who'd care?" We care, and we hope you do, too.

Martha Howard, Director THS

In Memoriam - 2015

January

Marilyn Lorraine Hosmer, Hartford, NH*
Katherine Burgess, Bradford, VT*
Howard W. Colby, Bradford, VT*
Beverly (Barker) Pasch, Fletcher, NC* **
Kaye Riley, White River Junction, VT*

February

Patricia Jean (Doyle) Holland, Ashland, NH*
Camilla A. Cook, Whit River Junction, VT**
Frank Thurston, Jr., Vershire, VT**
Daniel R. Wallace, West Hartford, VT*

March

Dale A. Cummings**
Clarence W. Hook, North Hartland, VT*

April

John Allen Gaudette, New Bern, NC
Deliliah F. Carpenter, Vershire, VT*
Ada Kurz
Loren Farrar, Canaan, NH*
Alice Bartholomew Pierson (Hebb)
Elizabeth Mary "Liz" Severance

May

Susan (Southworth) Ilsley**
Marion (Bonnett) Tyler, Haverhill, NH**
John Howard Gundy, Corinth, VT*

June

Jacqueline T. (Tullar) Bailey, Ipswich, MA* **
Genevieve A. McKee
Mary Anna (Utecht) Smith
William G. Steel, Greenville, Miss*
Allyne "Pij" (Cohen) Kadish, Waterbury, CT*
Jesse M. Stanley, Sr., Norwich, VT*
Arlene D. Powers, Wilder, VT
Hortense Felicie "Fels" Chabot
Kenneth R. Maxfield, Hartland, VT**
Bonnie Richmond, Claremont, NH*

July

Priscilla (McKinney) Burgess, Enfield, NH**
Howard Clark Patch, Lebanon, NH*
John Charles Judd**
Robert J. "Frog" Fournier
Paula R. Berquist
Judy Ozahowski
James Warren Fowle

August

E. John Beede**
George Patrick Freund

September

Lynwood Ladd Carter, Dover, NH*
Sally Ann (Southworth) Carter, Dover, NH*
Thomas Eaton**
Anthony "Tony" Shute, South Ryegate, VT*
Arvin C. "John" Manning, Jr.**

October

John L. MacKay
Doris May (Fifield) Cowden**
Brian A. Tuttle, Sr., Hartford, VT*

November

Patsy Barden Kasten
Priscilla R. Bean, Springfield, VT*
Walter "Chris" Orf, Quechee, VT **
Ruth May (Emerson) Bacon, Lyme, NH *

December

Phyllis J. Blake, West Fairlee, VT**
Betty Brown, Wilder, VT*
Sumner "Jay" Southworth**
Marilyn E. White, Bradford, VT**
Marjorie Lucetta (Hall) Steel, Greenville, Miss*
Clinton Irving "Buster" Bates, Jr., Monroe, NH*
Esther Elizabeth (Smith) Balch, Lyme, NH**
Ernest Joseph Wilmot, Essex Junction, VT**
Carl B. Brink, Jr., Bamberg, SC
Elizabeth (Davis) "Betty" Olsen, Autryville, NC**

(*family in town, ** TA/TES graduate) This information was obtained from the Valley News, Thetford Academy, and online sources. We tried our best to be accurate, but if we have inadvertently omitted someone or made an error, we apologize. Please let us know and we will put a correction in the next THS newsletter.

The Education of Mary Hosford - Part II, cont'd.,

The primary purpose of Oberlin's founding was to produce pastors who, like Asa Burton in Thetford two generations before, would provide religious leadership for the rough adventurers settling the rapidly disappearing wilderness. But the founders of Oberlin College also intended to provide "pious and intelligent" wives for their newly educated ministers who would otherwise be morally and intellectually isolated at their frontier stations. Indeed, a high percentage of Oberlin's early male graduates went on to enroll in the institution's three-year theological seminary and most were married the next day after graduation in August (usually a Thursday) to a recent graduate of Oberlin's Female Department, a program that did not offer a degree of any kind yet was part of the institution's experiment in co-education. It is interesting to note that students in the Female Department took nearly all the same courses as the young men in the Collegiate Department and that it was co-education at Oberlin that led to the first bachelor's degrees for women, not the post-secondary schools for women such as Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, established in 1837.

Mary Hosford began her studies at the Oberlin Institute as a twelve-year-old in the Preparatory Department in May, 1834, a year after her arrival from Thetford. At the age of sixteen (in August, 1837) she and three other young women were permitted to register as fully matriculated students in the Collegiate Department. The others were Elizabeth Prall of New York City, Caroline Rudd of Huntington, Connecticut, and Mary Kellogg of Jamestown, New York who later had to interrupt her studies. This historic moment was not planned. The founders of Oberlin (Shipherd and Steward) along with President Mahan and Charles Finney, a nationally known leader of the Second Great Awakening and the head of the Oberlin Seminary, simply decided to allow the matriculation of females as an experiment. Some faculty members objected and Alice Welch Cowles, formidable moral reformer, abolitionist, and the Principal of the Female Department objected strongly. Several months before the 1841 graduation of "the Dauntless Three" as they were called by some, Mary Hosford wrote to Mary Kellogg: "The trials, perplexities and discouragements with which we met in our first year you are quite too well acquainted with. The sophomore year was hardly less difficult. We seemed destined to days, and nights even, of toil and fatigue... Often do I look back to the time when so many, who occupied the most influential stations in the school, stood out against the course we were pursuing, and especially the unkind coldness and indifference of her to whom we would look for sympathy and counsel...Most of the faculty are now in favor in favor of [women taking] the college course, and Mrs. Cowles is advising all those young ladies who have the strength and means, to take a thorough course! Sometimes I feel like weeping tears of joy over those dear young ladies who are now making their way through the same path that we have trod, peaceful and unmolested."

Commencement Day arrived on August 25, 1841. It was preceded earlier in the month with oral exams witnessed by a delegation of clergymen who had come to Oberlin to make sure this radical institution was providing proper moral education to both genders of graduates. Commencement was held under a tent that held thousands, and in the afternoon the candidates, eight men and three women, presented their senior essays. It was customary in that time for females to refrain from public speaking and, in spite of the irony, the papers of the first three female bachelor degree recipients ever were read for them by a male, Professor John Morgan. Miss Rudd's essay was entitled, "True Heroism;" Miss Prall's was "Chain of Existences;" and Mary Hosford's was "A Lady's Apology." It is truly tragic that none of these papers exist, especially Mary's. There is no record that Mary disputed the assertion that it was she, her last name alphabetically being first of The Dauntless Three, who was the first woman in the world to ever to be handed a bachelor's degree, amended for gender to read, artium liberalium Baccaure AM.

Elizaberth Prall married a minister two days later and Mary Rudd married an Oberlin professor in October. Mary Hosford, on the other hand, became engaged to Caleb Ellis Fisher, one of the eight men in the class of '41 (his essay had been entitled "The Moral Law Adapted to its Subjects") and who was now enrolled at the Oberlin Theological Seminary; they were married the day after his graduation in 1844. Not long before her death, Mary filled out a questionnaire from Oberlin's Alumni Association and in it she reported that during those three years she taught school in Ohio City (Cleveland) and in Oberlin. She adds that in these years she also carried out "such studies as would fit one to be a pastor's wife."

And, indeed, Mary Hosford Fisher did spend her adult life as a pastor's wife as well as the mother of four children. Her husband, Caleb, over a span of twenty-nine years took Congregational pastorships in Arcade, New York, West Bloomfield, New York, Andover Massachusetts, and Lawrence, Massachusetts. He then briefly became the financial officer of Oberlin College and shortly before his death in 1876 he became the pastor of a Congregational church in Appleton, Wisconsin. Mary spent the final years of her life with her daughter, Mary Elizabeth Fisher, in Minneapolis until her own death on the first of September, 1884. She was sixty-three years old. On the Alumni Association's questionnaire under "Civil Offices filled, and honors received" Mary had written, "none."

Mary Hosford Fisher left behind no memoirs that we know of. Another Mary, Mary B. Slade, who lived in the brick house next door to the present Thetford Academy (a house built by Porter Turner for an uncle of Mary Hosford's in the year she was born) worked tirelessly on a detailed history of Thetford for over forty years; one of her obsessions was to find information about Mary Hosford Fisher. In 1934, came one of a thousand letters addressed inside to "My Dear Mrs. Slade." Mary Hosford's granddaughter, Alice Fisher Powell, wrote from Minneapolis that her grandmother had returned at least once to Thetford to visit and had told her children stories of traveling the Erie Canal. "My grandmother must have been a very fine and remarkable woman. Her parents were very religious and her husband, Mr. Caleb Fisher, belonged to the Puritan type but she was a cheery, lovely woman with the Hosford sense of humor. She always kept up her interest in books and fine art even while keeping her home and doing all the necessary things for her family... I'm sorry not to be able to help you more."

Mary Hosford's important contribution to the education of women has largely gone unrecognized, although in 1928 the D.A.R. placed a bronze tablet at Mary's grave in Warsaw, New York (the location of the Fisher family burial site). It reads: "Mary Hosford, graduating from Oberlin College in 1841, was the first woman ever to receive an A.B. degree." Representatives from Wellesley, Vassar, Wells, Smith, Mt. Holyoke, Cornell and other colleges attended the accompanying memorial service and Francis J. Hosford (no relation), professor emeritus at Oberlin College, spoke. "We may picture the woman whose memory we honor today, standing at the fast closed door of circumstance, striving with groping, girlish fingers to undo the lock - she knew not why, except that she wanted to pass the barrier. And such barriers once passed are gone forever."

Thanks to Peter Blodgett, Martha Howard, and the Oberlin College Archives.

More on Mary Hosford

An added piece of information that didn't make it into this article is the list of courses that Mary Hosford took while at Oberlin. See it on our website: www.thetfordhistoricalsociety.org, along with a complete version of this article.

Theford Historical Society Donors and Members
(June 1, 2015 through May 31, 2016)

Donors

Liora Alschuler
Alan and Janice Cook
Marvel Hauger
Rick and Roney Hoffman
Neil Meglathery and Polly Cole
Skip and Marilyn Sturman

Individuals

Alice Gollnick
Edna Goodrich
Rodney and Agnes Cook
Shirley Bond Maclay
Dian Price
Mary Wilmot

Families

James and Susan Allen
Kathleen Cunneen
Dandy Dion and Taylor Stedman
Roy Fava and Marilyn Welch-Fava
Rick and Roney Hoffman
Lee and Dawn Ilsley
John and Margaret Stephens
Bob and French McConnaughey
Mark and Amy McElroy
Robert Metzler and Marcia Dunning
Betty Miles
Doug and Valerie Miller
Steve Niederhauser
Ted and Judy Peters
Jay and Dionna Rimmel
Paul and Susan Rump
Paul and Joan Sargent
Michael Schunk and Perry Allison
Frank and Connie Snyder
George and Janet Stowell
Kathy Strand
Howard Sussman and Margaret Gilmore
Fred and Marjorie Thomas
Peter and Thelma Thompson
Bill and Susan Thrane
Dexter and Helena Tilden
Marshall and Joan Van Norden
Anne Sargent Walker
Jean Wolstenholme

Patrons

James Barrett
Ruel and Virginia Barrett
Judy Barwood
Andy Boyce and Jen Boeri-Boyce
Fred Breunig and Patrice Murray
Tyler Brown and Meg Kremzner
David Ozahowski
Joe Deffner and Sarah Martel
Pat and Judy Dixon
David Fisk and Jennifer Davey
Daniel and Dana Grossman
John and Priscilla Hall
Martha Howard
Ken and Karen Kaliski
Giovanni and Amy Bosco
Henry and Barbara Payson
Jon and Ruth MacKinnon
Alpha Bond
Victor Henningson
Susanna French
Caroline Cressman Riggs
Cyrus Severance
Arthur and Dianne Sharkey
Carolyn Tomlinson
Dean Whitlock and Sally Duston
Lilla Willey

Sponsors

Barry and Sarah Clarke
William Estabrook and Joan Tomasi
Herb and Beckie Gray
Richard and Roberta Howard
John Jackson
Jared Betts
John and Kay Morton
John and Susan Arnold
Richard and Nancy Higgerson
Deborah Ornstein
Jesse and Tara Pacht
Robert and Wendy Wells
Karl Tilden and Beverly Slack
Gary and Jean Ulman
Martha Wiencke

Thank you!

Geography Bee Returns on November 4th at T.A.

Once again, teams will be gathering at Thetford Academy in early November, answering questions on all matters geographical. As in the past, we've selected a theme for our Bee - this year's subject: "Vermont vs. New Hampshire" - a friendly, twin state rivalry.

Three-person teams answer multiple choice questions, and the winning teams win cool prizes. There are two divisions: Youth (grades 5-8) and Adult (grade 9 and beyond). Additional details and sign up sheets will be available soon on our website - look for announcements on the local listserv, and on our Facebook page.

The Individuals and businesses listed at right sponsored our Bee last year, and we're grateful for their support. We also appreciate Thetford Academy's continued involvement hosting the event. Funds raised each year by the Geography Bee go towards special projects at the Hughes Barn Museum.

B B B

2015 Geo Bee Sponsors

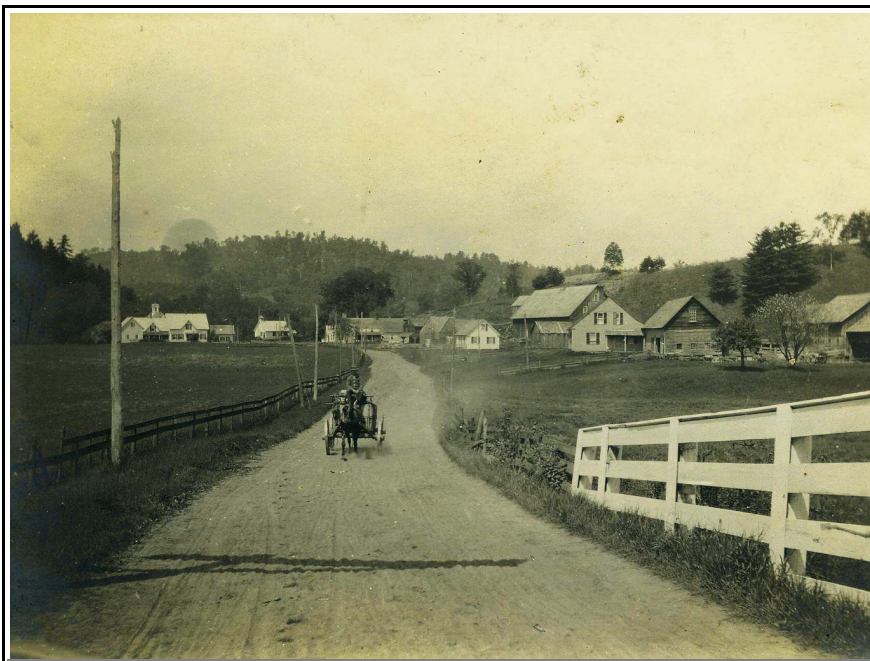
Gold Level (\$50+)

E.C. Brown's Nursery
Simple Energy
Alicia Willette, DDS
Crossroad Farm
Howard Homestead Farm, LLC
Odell Insurance Agency
Baker's Store & The Village Store
Cole Electric, Inc.
Thetford Auto Service
The Barefoot Gourmet
Merrill Lynch
Watson's Automotive

Silver Level (\$25+)

Morton Trails, LLC
Grossman and Ripps
Shearz, Etc.
Fifield Electric
Isabell's Café
Robert A. Metzler Building
& Remodeling
Green Mountain Dojo
Green Mountain Handyman
Folk Floors

Mystery Photo



Can you help us place this photo from our archives?

We thought this was interesting, due to the poles erected along the road, with no wires yet strung. The image is labeled 'East Thetford', but we don't think that's right. Does it look familiar?

Send us your thoughts via email to info@thetfordhistoricalsociety.org. We'll post it on our Facebook page, as well.

Did You Miss the Vermont History Expo?

We will have our exhibit, "Powering the Past: Charles Vaughan Brings Electricity to Thetford" at the Thetford Hill Fair on Saturday, July 30th.

The exhibit, which features historic and contemporary photos, letters, diary and ledger entries, *and* a working replica of a hydro electric generating plant, documents the Thompson and Vaughan Electric Co., who operated out of the former Sayre Grist Mill just below the covered bridge in Thetford Center. Also included is a 1980s era video interview with Robert Vaughan Sr., formerly of East Thetford (Charles Vaughan's nephew) who narrates a walk around the site.

Thank you to the Vaughan family for letting us use the video in our exhibit and for donating a copy to our archives. Thanks also to Don Fifield, for sharing some early Sayre family photos of the mill site and Thetford Center.

30 or 40 Years Ago Isn't "Historical", Right?

Photographing everyday life may seem trivial, but these recently uploaded pictures say otherwise. Visit www.flickr.com/thetfordvt and click on the Albums tab, then scroll through the *Post Mills Area People* images. These slides from the 1970s and '80s, were donated by the Aldrich family, all identified and dated. So many familiar faces - what a treasure!

No Barn Museum This Summer

For the first summer in decades, the Hughes Barn Museum will not be open on Sunday afternoons in August and early September. The Route 113 reconstruction project has hampered access, and parking would be next to impossible. Our apologies to patrons, especially loyal fans of the Pie Contest. We will be re-opening in 2017, and look forward to seeing you then!

Thetford Historical Society
PO Box 33
Thetford, VT 05074

**PRSR STD
ECRWSS
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
EDDM RETAIL**

Dance to The Flames at the Pavilion

The Flames again rock the Pavilion dance venue in East Thetford on Saturday, August 6th. Won't you join us?

Learn how to swing dance, beginning at 6:30. Dancing begins in earnest at 7:00, until 9:30 or so.

The Flames play a dance-able mix from the 50s, 60s and 70s - fun for all ages! Cold drinks and refreshments will be provided - no alcohol, please. Admission by donation, at the door. Hope to see you there!

Local

Postal Customer