

Thetford Historical Society
M 35
OM 8

THETFORD PAGEANT
PAPERS, 1810-1937
2 manuscript boxes, 1 oversize box

Provenance: Slade collection 1965, with many additions

Processed by Barbara Condict and Charles Latham, 2004

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Pageant of Thetford, performed in August 1911, had the main purpose of celebrating the 150th anniversary of Thetford's founding in 1761. As it developed, it had the secondary but very important effect of bringing together the people of Thetford's villages to work for a common purpose.

Planning for the Pageant began in 1910. Among the prime movers were Mr and Mrs Nelson Porter, Prof. and Mrs. Charles H. Farnsworth, Rev. William Slade and Mrs. Slade, Mrs. William L. Murfey, C. E. Emerson, A. B. Palmer, Mrs. Charles Augustus Vaughan, Ellsworth Sargent, and Frederick T. Howard. Early in the planning, the group brought in William Chauncey Langdon of the Russell Sage Foundation, who was involved in many pageants at the time and believed in them as a catalyst in developing civic cooperation and pride. The Farnsworths, who had in 1909 founded Camp Hanoum, a girls' camp in Thetford with a strong emphasis on music and dance, added a strong flavor of those arts.

The Pageant consisted of twelve episodes, with glimpses of the Town's history from the arrival of the first permanent settler, "Quail John" Chamberlin, the founding of the Thetford Hill church and of Thetford Academy and the coming of the railroad, to modern problems and ways of facing them-- "The new Agriculture, the New Education, the New Life." There were also two interludes of music and dance, and a grand finale hailing Thetford, Vermont, and America. Performance spread over three days.

Publicity for the Pageant was thoroughly done, including a letter of endorsement from Theodore Roosevelt. A site was chosen in a meadow in North Thetford between the

Connecticut River and the railroad, which brought people up for the day to see the show. About five hundred local people (out of a town with 1,100 population) took parts in the Pageant, including campers from both Hanoum and Aloha Camps, and it drew a considerable crowd of spectators. Several mementoes were widely sold, including a play booklet and an enameled watch fob with leather strap.

When it was all over, there was apparently a sizeable surplus, enough to keep a committee busy for over seventeen years.

Sources: Materials in collection

SCOPE AND CONTENT

This collection, consisting of two manuscript boxes and one oversize box, contains records dating mainly from the years 1910 to 1912, but extending to 1937. Included are correspondence, sheet music, committee minutes, printed material, and photographs. A box and folder listing follows.

BOX AND FOLDER LISTING

Box 1-- Planning, Correspondence, publicity

- Folder 1: Preliminary planning
- Folder 2: Committee meetings 19190-1928
- Folder 3: Correspondence-- 1910
- Folder 4: 1911- January-February 1917
- Folder 5: March - June
- Folder 6: July
- Folder 7: August
- Folder 8: September - December
- Folder 9: no month
- Folder 10: 1912-1917
- Folder 11: 1930-1127
- Folder 12: n.d.
- Folder 13: Episodes
- Folder 14: Songs and programs
- Folder 15: Booklet-- "The Pageant of Thetford"
- Folder 16: Stationery, small posters, tickets
- Folder 17: Articles and clippings
- Folder 18: Vermonter magazine-- August 1911, March 1912
- Folder 19: Outlook magazine-- September 1911

Box 2-- Publicity; Wiliam Chauncey Langdon; Photographs

- Folder 1: Manuscript article by Mrs. Charles A. Vaughan
- Folder 2: Article by David Glassberg "History and the Public"
- Folder 3: Articles by W. C. Langdon
- Folder 4: Connection of Langdon to Campfire Girls
- Folder 5: Photographs-- Episodes 1 and 2
- Folder 6: Episode 3
- Folder 7: Interlude 1
- Folder 8: Episodes 4 and 5
- Folder 9: Photographs-- Episodes 7, 8, and 9
- Folder 10: Episodes 10, 11, and 12; Interlude II
- Folder 11: Episode 13
- Folder 12: Finale, grandstand
- Folder 13: Extra copies
- Folder 14: More photographs in OM 8

OM 8 -- 1 box

- Folder 1: Posters
- Folder 2: Musical scores
- Folder 3: School coloring kit
- Folder 4: Photographs
- Folder 5: *Boston Herald, Bradford Opinion*
- Folder 6: *Suburban Life*

Objects

- Watch fobs with leather straps
- Tomahawk made for Pageant by Robert Young
- Rubber stamp
- 2 burlap costumes-- red, green