



Spinmings

Number 18

Spring 2004

SOCIETY SEEKS PICTURE OF ORIGINAL MEETING HOUSE

The Chesterfield Historical Society recently came across this tantalizing information concerning the original Chesterfield Meeting House:

‘A fine picture of this old church [Meeting House] has recently been made from a sketch of Judge Hoyt H. Wheeler of Brattleboro, Vt. It was exhibited at our recent Old Home Week celebration. We hope that a copy of it may soon be placed in our Town Hall.’

This was part of an “Historical Sermon for the Reopening of the Congregational Church, Chesterfield, 3rd July Sabbath, 1900” by the Rev. Chas. N. Sinnett.

The Meeting House was built before March 1770, and was destroyed by an arsonist on March 1, 1851. It is well described in Oran Randall’s *History of Chesterfield*, which was published in 1882:

It stood on the common at the Centre Village. It stood about thirty-five feet south of the site of the present town-house, and was about sixty feet long and forty-five feet wide. It was two stories high, with two rows of windows, and had a projecting bell-tower on the west end, and a porch on the east end. ...The principal entrance to the building was at the middle of the south side. From this entrance a broad aisle led to the pulpit, which was located in the middle of the north side of the building, at an elevation of several feet above the ground-floor. Above the pulpit hung the sounding board, and in front of it, on the ground-floor was an enclosed seat, called the “deacon’s seat.” There was also a row of square pews next to the wall, extending entirely around the inside of the house, except at the entrance passages and where the pulpit stood. The other pews, below, were arranged in about the same order as they usually were in meeting-houses of the last century. In front of the outer row of pews, or “wall pews” was a continuous aisle. Above, there was a gallery on the east and west ends, and south side, with rows of pews. For very many years there were no stoves in the building,

except the little "Foot-stoves" that some of the worshippers used to carry to church with them in cold weather, and which were replenished, during the intermissions, with live coals at the neighboring houses.

As early as 1780, the town voted to allow horse-sheds to be built on the north side of the common, near the meeting-house; and in 1804, to allow certain persons to build sheds along the west side of the old grave-yard. Between the east end of the meeting-house and the grave-yard, was a large horse-block, an indispensable thing in the days when women, as well as men, went to church on horseback. On the first day of March, 1851, at one o'clock in the morning, the old meeting-house was burned to the ground by an incendiary fire. A strong westerly wind was blowing at the time, which bore the cinders and burning fragments of wood far to the eastward, setting fire to the dead grass (for there was no snow on the ground), and thus causing several acres of land east of the Centre Village to be burned over, and endangering the safety of other buildings.

For upward of four score years had it braved storm and tempest, and the ravages of time, to fall by the hand of a Vandal!

As you can well imagine, we would be most desirous of having a copy of this picture, and would be excited to hear from anyone who could help us procure. I would, in a way bring that picture back home where it would hang in a place of honor in our historical society building which stands about where the old meeting house stood. Anyone who could in help in any way please call Audrey Ericson 363-8856, or Neil Jenness 363-8018, or write to Audrey Ericson, P.O. Box 205, Chesterfield NH 03443-0205.

WHAT'S NEW AT THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY?

Martha Potter's project has become an even larger undertaking than she had planned. Not only has she taken pictures of every cottage on the lake and identified the owners, she has researched previous owners, interviewed old-timers, and is beginning to have a book that encompasses the History and Description of Lake Spofford. It has taken many, many hours of conscientious work, which will be invaluable to future generations of Lake Spofford residents and other people.

Continuing projects by other members include:

Answering letters regarding genealogy research

Filing scrapbook material (including newsclippings past and present). Mary Gold's sharp eye scans the *Keene Sentinel* for relevant news, which she clips out to be pasted and indexed. These will be History in a very few years.

Jean Hansen has been indexing some of the older scrapbooks.

Freda Davis continues to scan our old photos onto CDs for posterity. She is up to 2000-something out of the over 4000 pictures and growing we now have.

John Hudachek is working with our picture filing program to integrate several fields for quicker research. He has also been a great help during our several computer emergencies this winter.

Neil Jenness has been updating the artifacts file, going through each of our boxes and numbering and listing each item.

(WHAT'S NEW, CONT.)

Also, Neil and Audrey Ericson recently presented a program on Ice Harvesting, with artifacts and a slide show for grades 3 & 4 at the school.

Jane Allen has continued to bring in more treasures for our information and to display. These include...

Two plates from the Silverdale Hotel: 'Steamer on the Lake.'
Teapots from the Pine Grove Springs Hotel
Two Silverdale plates
An old Grange Directory
More Spofford school photos
And...bottles, a clay marble, block designs, and article on HF Stone, several booklets
and a number of very nice post cards—and an old croquet ball from the Pine Grove Springs Hotel dump!

Winifred Cray donated a number of interesting items from Winston's collection

FOCS gave us their treasurer and secretary books that went back to its inception.

We received materials concerning the celebration of the Centennial of Bishop Francis Asbury's preaching here from the **Asbury Church**.

The Guyette family brought us a number of their family mementos, including slides, family notebooks and scrapbooks, and a cobblers palm protector to add to the Charles Thompson collection

Nancy Hines, who has been an invaluable summer volunteer, donated 5 photos of the old Win Faulkner home.

Nina Foster gave us a 1940s map of the Lake, showing buoys etc.

Audrey Ericson brought in several Chickering family photographic portraits.

In addition, we received ...From **Harlan Fiske Stone II**, a 3 ½ inch Harlan Fiske Stone bronze medallion with a list of his achievements on the back and some family portraits.

We purchased two new books: *Log Drives on the Connecticut River* by Bill Gore and *A Building History of Northern New England*, which caught our eye because it has Hudacheks' house on the cover.

FROM THE “MAPLEWOOD NEWSLETTER”

*When the sun is in the west
Lazy people work the best
When the sun is in the east
It's fit for neither man nor beast
When the sun is in the north
Skillful fisherman goes not forth
When the sun is in the south
The wind blows the bait into the fish's mouth.*

Eleanor (Ellie) Pearson

WOOL SPINNING DEMONSTRATION A SUCCESS

The spinning wheel lecture and demonstration given last September 27th appealed to a wide variety of people of all ages, some coming over from Vermont. Lorraine Carey Block brought with her several wheels with different wheel heads, and after a short but informative lecture about wheel heads and the spinning process, demonstrated the use of each. She then held an open hands-on workshop, helping each would-be spinner learn how it is done.



OLD NEWS

Recently, we received an E-mail from Bud Hildreth in Florida regarding his grand-aunt Rose Cornelia Hildreth (The John Hildreth home was later the Walter Dunbar/Wisell Farm.) It was a quote from a *National Police Gazette* of October 1st, 1892:

“CHLOROFORMED WHILE SHE SLEPT

Fayette Haskins, a young man who came from Jamaica, has been paying attention to the daughter of John Hildreth of Chesterfield, N.H., but the young woman did not reciprocate his affections. The other night while she was asleep in her room, Haskins placed a ladder to the window and climbed in. He attempted to chloroform her, but when he tried to lift her from the bed she was partially aroused and screamed for help. Members of the family came to help and Haskins fled. He was captured in Brattleboro, Vt., and sent back to Chesterfield.”

COMING EVENTS

Contrary to the information in the 2004 Historical Society calendar, the Board of Directors of the Chesterfield Historical Society have decided that, due to low attendance at previous meetings, there will no longer be evening Wednesday informational meetings. There will be Sunday afternoon meetings relating to projects we now have in the works, or as other special opportunities arise.

**The Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Supper
will be held as usual
October 20th at 6:30 pm**

Also ...

On April 26: The annual meeting of the Historical Society of Cheshire County will be held at the building on South Main Street in Keene. The scheduled speaker is Colin Calloway, professor of Native American Studies at Dartmouth College. 7:30.

On April 30, May 1 & 2, 7, 8, & 9 in Putney Vt.: *The Equivalent Lands*, a historical drama that tells of the struggles of early Vermonters during Revolutionary times in their dispute with New York and New Hampshire for their lands. Performances on Fridays and Saturdays start at 7:30 pm, those on Sunday at 3 pm, at the Landmark College in Putney. Tickets are \$8 for adults, or \$6 for children and seniors. Tickets May be purchased at the Vermont Theatre Company box office 802-258-1344, or a www.vermonttheatrecompany.com. *Anyone interested in carpooling on April 30, call Neil Jenness at 363-8018.*

On May 4th the Historical Society of Cheshire County will have its annual fund-raising book sale. Call for more information.