



# The Peacham Patriot

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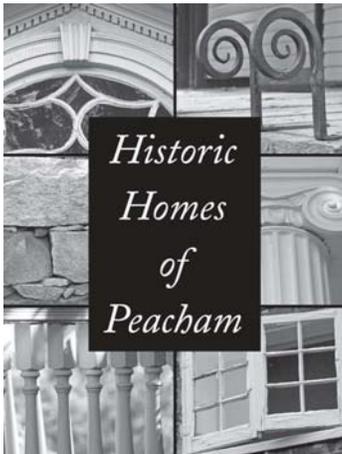
Peacham Historical Association

Winter 2008

## Carrie Ellen Thresher Memorial Gift Awarded to Miko Kempton

The Peacham Historical Association at its Annual Meeting on August 5, 2008 awarded the Carrie Ellen Thresher Memorial Gift to Miko Kempton in recognition of her contributions to the Peacham community and in Carrie Ellen Thresher's memory. The gift is awarded annually to a graduating high school or a home-schooled senior and is designed to further the student's education. Carrie Thresher was an important person in the Peacham community. She felt that it was essential to take an interest in and give back to our town. The annual gift recognizes her strong interest in community service. Established in 2002, this annual gift to a graduating senior encourages high school students to take an active role in our town.

## Historic Homes of Peacham Wins Award



The Vermont Historical Society has chosen to honor the Peacham Historical Association with a Publications Award for its publication *Historic Homes of Peacham*.

The Award of Excellence in the category of Publications was given by the Vermont Historical Society at the

November 7, 2008 League of Local Historical Societies meeting in Bellows Falls.

Published in December 2007, *Historic Homes of Peacham* in words and pictures surveys the rich legacy of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century houses in Peacham. The book documents our remarkably intact 19<sup>th</sup> century village

with descriptions and photographs of over 100 houses built before 1900.

*Historic Homes of Peacham* is available from the Peacham Historical Association, The hard cover book is \$40.00 and the soft cover is \$30.00 plus \$5.00 for shipping and handling. Ordering information may also be found on the Peacham Historical Association web site: <http://www.peachamhistorical.org>.

## Vermont Landscape Change Program Scans Photographs from PHA Collections

After the successful collaboration with the Vermont Landscape Change Program at the University of Vermont during the preparation of the historic photographs for *Historic Homes of Peacham*, we agreed on a follow-up scanning project. On October 3, 2008, Jamie Russell from the Vermont Landscape Change Program spent the day at the PHA Research Collections and scanned 125 historic photographs. Many of the photographs were taken around 1900 by the Bickford sisters; others came from the extensive Hooker collection of photographs; and still others are from several smaller collections of photographs. Lynn Bonfield helped in identifying many of the photographs for the scanning project. This innovative collaboration is beneficial for both organizations: On the one hand, the Peacham Historical Association obtained digitally enhanced scans at no cost, a critical factor for our small organization. The photographs will be part of PHA's online collection of scanned images. On the other hand, the Vermont Landscape Change Program gained access to a remarkable collection of PHA's historic photographs, which will be available in the spring on the Program's online archive of paired historic and recent photos of Vermont landscapes. The Website is: <http://www.uvm.edu/landscape/>

The 125 photographs include a series of photographs of farming operations around 1900; others show views in Peacham that highlight the dramatic changes in our



The photo above picture of a snow roller is an example of the photos from the Landscape project.

landscape since the early 1900's marked by the disappearance of open fields. All photographs are an amazing record of the changing face of our town in the course of more than 100 hundred years. We plan to select some of the historic photographs of farming operations for an exhibit at the Historical House next summer.

### Can You Identify this Photograph?

We need your help in identifying this issue's mystery photo. The photograph was taken around 1890 by the Brown Studio in Peacham. If you recognize the buildings, please get in touch with Mel Reis, Editor, Peacham Patriot at [mreis@stjacademy.org](mailto:mreis@stjacademy.org) or 802-592-3079.



### President's Page Jutta Scott, PHA President

This August marks my first term as PHA's President. I had previously worked on several Peacham Historical Association projects. For several years I have been a docent at the Historical House during the summer; I helped to

organize several fundraising programs; and most recently I coordinated the publication of the pictorial

history of Peacham's 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century homes, *Historic Homes of Peacham*. But I am thrilled at the opportunity to serve as President. PHA owes much to the work of outgoing President Mel Reis, and I look forward to building on her initiatives.

2008 has been an exciting year for PHA. In June, the Del Prete family deeded the East Peacham Schoolhouse to PHA. A newly appointed Committee on the East Peacham Schoolhouse will work with the Peacham community to tell the story behind this newest addition to PHA's historical sites. The Committee will seek ways for the Schoolhouse's ongoing protection and use as a classroom for education and learning about 19<sup>th</sup> century one-room schoolhouses. The PHA Board has also begun exploring options for moving its research collections to more accessible and environmentally protected space.

Recognizing the opportunities and challenges we have in front of us, the PHA Executive Board is currently examining all aspects of the Association's operations, programs, and financial status in order to shape the role of PHA in our community and to chart PHA's course for the next five years. When completed, the resulting Five-Year Strategic Plan will provide a guide and road map with a clear understanding of PHA's mission and a set of goals. Our planning will be a unifying process aimed at reaching consensus among Board members and the Peacham community about charting PHA's future. Throughout the Board's discussions two vital agreements are: an affirmation of PHA's core mission to protect and preserve Peacham's heritage and an acknowledgment of the many things PHA does well. But PHA also faces serious challenges in caring for its research collections and for its special historic sites. Foremost is the need to safeguard PHA's collections and to house them in secure, environmentally controlled space. As set out in the initial draft of the PHA Strategic Plan the broad goals are:

- To collect, preserve and make accessible PHA's research collections;
- To protect and preserve sites relating to the history of Peacham;
- To increase the awareness and understanding of Peacham's history; and
- To secure financial resources essential to support PHA's mission.

Over the next few months the Board will develop strategies and actions to achieve these goals. We plan to share the draft of the PHA Strategic Plan with members and will welcome your comments and involvement.

We are looking forward to a productive new year and are grateful for the ongoing support of the Peacham community for PHA. PHA could not offer the diverse range of programs without the help of the many volunteers. Thank you all!

## **Peacham Hollow Schoolhouse Comes Out of the Shadows**

**Anna Rubin, PHA Trustee**

A lively bridge through history is being uncovered in East Peacham. The Peacham Hollow Schoolhouse, built in 1858, was made available to the Peacham Historical Association last year. Since June 2008 when PHA formally took ownership, a steady flow of generous volunteers have revealed a slice of Peacham's past that had been hidden from view for decades. The Peacham Hollow Schoolhouse was the last one-room school to remain open, welcoming students until 1968. In the process of cleaning out the classic gable-fronted structure, the former students and teachers have stopped in to talk about their memories of this school as a place where neighbors gathered.



The schoolhouse is located on the Peacham-Barnet Road, facing the Windsong Wildlife Sanctuary. It would have been easy to miss for the past several decades, since it had been converted to a private residence that was rarely used and large firs crowded the front access. The front window banks of six-over-six sashes are still boarded up, but today light once again reaches the columned entry porch. There is hope that this building will welcome visitors and be a place of learning and creativity, linking Peacham's past and present.

Mary Ellen Reis was President of the Peacham Historical Association when she was contacted by Tom Del Prete, the previous owner of the schoolhouse. He was offering the schoolhouse to the PHA as a gift which was immediately accepted by the Executive Board of the PHA. The excitement grew from the fact that this

schoolhouse was the last operational one-room schoolhouse in town and could become a place for our community to enjoy. Gretchen Bond, who taught at the Peacham Hollow School, had photographs of her students. Thelma White, who also taught there, remembered names and faces and lessons. Under the leadership of PHA's new president, Jutta Scott, a team has emerged to interpret education in Peacham for a new generation with the voices of the students and teachers of the Peacham Hollow School.

First order of business was to assess the building's condition – a fallen foundation, walls with little or no insulation – and deal with rooms filled with miscellaneous items from the previous owner, most of it unrelated to the school. Lorna Quimby devoted countless hours to the task, sorting through boxes, pulling up rugs, examining artifacts. With help from Bob and Sharon Fuehrer, hundreds (no kidding!) of bags and crates were loaded with items to be taken out. Saturday mornings, for several weeks in a row, Dave and Jim Stauffer and Neal Gombus worked with Lorna to sort through decades of yard-sale debris. What remains are a few pieces of furniture and decorative details of the plain style one-room school that was lively with children in the not-too-distant past.

While what lies within the walls has had benefited from Lorna's expert attention, the exterior of the building still begs for support. Even with help from Dick Quimby and Andy Cochran to stabilize the foundation, the schoolhouse is not safe for more than three or four people in its main room at any one time. Duncan Bond and David Magnus cleared some of the trees, but the structure cries out for repair and is still crowded by overgrown brush.

And there was another unexpected gift: the Peacham Hollow Schoolhouse came with its own transportation in the form of a 1964 Studebaker – rusted shut and stuck deep in the mud. With help from former Peacham Hollow students Gary Schoolcraft and Dick Blair, a new owner came to claim the vehicle, removing one more layer of private overlay from this formerly public space.

Now that some of the recent layers of neglect have been lifted, the Peacham Hollow Schoolhouse once again has a presence in East Peacham. Conversations about its future as a place to interpret education or serve another public function in Peacham continue ... and we'll be letting you know where they lead! In the meantime, if you or anyone you know is interested in helping with the renovation of the historic Peacham Hollow Schoolhouse, please contact the PHA.

The PHA would like to again express our thanks to Mr. Del Prete and his family for their generous donation.

## **Have you any wool? Lorna Quimby, PHA Archivist**

While researching sheep and the wool trade for this year's display at the Historical House I found, once again, the truism I learned in Economics 101. Price supports eventually cause a surplus and a surplus eventually forces lower prices.

In 1824 Congress imposed a tariff on imported woolen cloth. The tariff was relaxed in 1841. By the late 1840s, the price charged for Vermont fleeces fell below the cost of production. The number of sheep in Peacham's grand lists for the period reflect the rise and fall in the market prices. Bogart must have used the agricultural censuses for his figures in *Peacham, the Story of a Vermont Hill Town*, page 311. In 1826, there were 1766 sheep in town; in 1936, 3914; and in 1840, the highest number, 9,388. I used the 1840 grand list and arrived at a figure of 6,250. (Did farmers inflate their numbers for the state's census?) By 1850, the numbers had dropped to 1416 as farmers turned to other sources of income.

Economic figures rarely indicate the reality that lies behind them. As long as prices were good, sheep were an attractive crop for Peacham farmers. Land on Cow Hill and on the East Hill was steep and "boney", better suited for raising sheep than cattle. Farms, their buildings now only indicated on the Cellar Hole map done by Louise Bayley in 1941, had from ten to twenty sheep. Some had even fewer. The farms in that part of town that had been Deweyburg, the land now completely wooded, also carried small flocks. But some of these now-deserted farms, such as that owned by Benjamin Bickford on Penny Street, with a flock of 118, or Ira Blake, off the Lanesboro road with 100, definitely make their main income from selling sheep and wool.

Bigger farms, that later made a successful transition to producing cream and, after that, milk for the creameries, were the ones that had the biggest flocks. Jacob Blanchard, whose acres bordered the road from Peacham to Danville (#46, now owned by the Fickes), had 235. Ezra Chamberlain, on Green Bay Loop, had 270. Thomas Eastman, where the Crismans live, had 150. David Choate, where Maurice Chandler now lives, had a flock of 180 sheep. Independence Farrow had 120 and Theodore Farrow had 80. Frank Farrow on Mack's Mountain road had 55 sheep and his neighbor on the old Lanesboro road, Alex McDonald, owned 80. The Partridges, both of whom lived in the South Part, had large flocks: Joseph, 140 sheep and Lyman, 138. The

Merrill brothers on Penny Street had 130. Moses Martin, now the Keenan home, on Green Bay Loop, had 90. Schuyler Merrill, who owned the Elkins farm, had another large flock, 179. The pamphlet, "When Sheep Ruled Vermont, Peacham Sheep in 1840," gives a complete list of farmers and the size of their flocks in the 1840 Peacham grand list.

The 1840 census shows the number of males over five years of age in each household. No matter how many sheep the farm carried, none had more than five males available and not all of those were fully grown. When the seasons came when the sheep demanded the most attention, i.e. lambing, dipping, shearing, one wonders where the flock owners gathered the necessary help. It is possible the farmers helped each other with bees, but it is hard to imagine that one who had nearly 100 ewes lambing would have much time to help someone else.

Vermont winter's can be cruel. Peacham flocks required barns for shelter from the inclement weather and farmers had to provide hay for their sustenance.

The role the women played in the process was unacknowledged. When the wool was not sold or traded as soon as the sheep were sheared, the job of preparing and spinning the wool belonged to the women of the household. The process is described by John Gould in *The House that Jacob Built* (William Morrow Company, New York 1947, 59).

[During the] spinning season, Grandmother and the older girls would go up there [an open, unfinished chamber] and get a couple of the old wheels going—the big wool wheels. One girl carding could turn out rolls to keep two spinners busy, and the two who spun walked miles upon countless miles back and forth on those rattly boards [the boards had not been nailed down] with the vibration and hum of the wheels setting the whole house to throbbing. Grandmother was quickest at it. She would walk up to the wheel and put the wooden "finger" against a spoke and flip the thing hard enough so the momentum would carry the fliers while she backed off and fed the wool in. Pushing, pulling, feeling, smoothing—her nimble fingers would pass the carded wool in just fast and thick enough to make the twist, and she would

walk up with the roving just in time to flip the wheel again and not lose the speed.

Whew! They certainly didn't have to use a treadmill to get enough exercise. The wool they spun would be traded at the store, the mill or wherever they need goods they couldn't produce on the farm. In 1840, the storekeeper, the miller or the blacksmith would send the wool to Boston or to Montreal on one of the annual trips to market.

In his *Yankee Drummer* (Whittlesay House, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York: London 1947, 120), another Gould, Ralph E. gives us a picture of the life on a small hillside farm. As a drummer [sales representative] for farm machinery, Gould called on an agent. The agent lived on a little Vermont farm, high up on a mountain. He and Gould discussed the cost of living.

The farmer said he and his large family lived well because they raised nearly everything on the farm. The groceries were taken care of by the butter and eggs. The wool bought the clothing and paid their taxes. They hauled some wood to the doctor and the church to cover those outlays, and the money for the lambs went into the bank. They had the maple-syrup money for extras.

[Gould] asked him how much money he counted on each year for extras. He said he needed one dollar to subscribe for the paper and a little for postage and a few things like that. After figuring a few minutes he concluded, "I can get by with seven dollars, but I had ought to have eleven."

The farmer's life was near the bone, but his family had enough to eat and clothes to wear. There would not be much over to help the older children start their households or gain further education. When the sheep bubble burst, many an outlying farm was abandoned, their owners going west in hopes of milder winters, where they could buy land cheaply, raise crops, sheep included, and make a living.

## **Peacham Historical Association Mission**

*The PHA collects, preserves, and makes available materials and sites relating to the history of the town of*

*Peacham for educational purposes so that future generations as well as the present one might benefit.*

## **PHA Wish List**

We are in need of funds to pay for electrical work at the Historical House. The work involves upgrading the wiring to code and adding additional outlets. The estimate is \$1,425. If you wish to make a donation, please send it to PHA, P.O. Box 101, Peacham, VT 05862.

## **With Grateful Appreciation: Recent Donations**

Phyllis Freeland Broyles gave PHA an interesting gift. Phyllis lives in California. Jerry and Diana Senturia visited her and brought her gift east. She gave us two 6½ x 8½ inch note books. Their covers are marbled effect brown and green. They belonged to Laura Sargeant Palmer, who lived in the house at the corner of Old Cemetery Road and the East Peacham Road in the late 1880's.

The first book, with "Laura E. Sargeant Palmer, Peacham, Vt. 1847-1937 - her book" on the first page, is an account book with columns but contains "receipts" from various Peacham women: Sarah Blanchard's Graham Bread; Bertha's Brown Bread; Mildred Farrows' Cake and so on.

The second book, a lined "exercise" book, has Jan. 1900 "Records of the Fifty Club" on the first page. This of great interest, for PHA has photographs of the Sixty Club and the Fifty Club.



Above photo is of the Ashbel Goodenough Blacksmith Shop donated by Dick Hovey.

A special thank you to Jon Reis for mowing the PHA lawns this summer and Joe Miller for opening and closing the Historic House for the season. Another special thanks to Joe for being our resident blacksmith and opening the shop during the summer months.

**The Community House/  
Peacham Academy Gym  
Lois Field White, Peacham Academy Alumni  
Newsletter, Summer 2008**

**2008-2009 Membership Dues**

Dues are \$5.00 per person and may be paid to PHA Treasurer Larry Jensen, P. O. Box 101, Peacham, VT 05862, with check payable to the Peacham Historical Assn.

**2008-2009 PHA Officers and Trustees**

(as of the August 5, 2008 PHA Annual Meeting):

**Officers:**

President: Jutta Scott  
Vice President: Dart Thalman  
Secretary: Karen Gallas  
Treasurer: Larry Jensen

**Trustees:**

Class of 2010- Anna Rubin  
Class of 2010- Diana Senturia  
Class of 2009- Karin Van Orman  
Class of 2009- Mel Reis  
Class of 2011- Karen Lewis

**The Peacham Historical Association Office and  
Reference Library**

**Winter Hours**

**Mondays: 9-11:30 a.m.**

**Thursdays: 2-4 p.m.**

(or by appointment)

Call 802-592-3571

**Extended Hours for Archives and  
Collections**

As part of our efforts to provide greater access to PHA's holdings of manuscripts, photographs and numerous other categories of material, we are extending the open hours to PHA's Historic Archives and Collections.

The collections are now available to researchers for an additional two hours each week. In addition to the regular winter hours of Monday mornings from 9:00am to 11:30am, the Research Room will now be open on Thursday afternoon from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Research Room is located above the antique shop in the Peacham Store building in the center of town.

Remember when we went roller skating at the Old Community House?

That building was constructed in 1832 as a home for the Methodist Episcopal Church Society, organized in 1831. The membership numbered 256 by 1856, but by 1860 there were only 70 members and the congregation continued to decline. By 1930, the church disbanded. Later the building was purchased by Arthur James Todd and his wife, Martha Gaddis Todd, summer residents, and gifted to the Town of Peacham to be used as a building for community activities.

The Community Association was organized in the early 1930's to renovate and maintain the building. Members borrowed money, put on various entertainments, and contributed labor and supplies to renovate the former church. The cupola and the platform holding pulpit, organ, and the carpeting were all removed. A small kitchen and a dressing room and a balcony above them, were added at the north end of the former sanctuary; a hardwood floor was laid and a heating system added. When the renovations were completed dances, receptions, proms, holiday parties, roller skating and other activities were held to continue raising funds to retire the debt.

In Peacham, The Story of a Vermont Hill Town, author Ernest L. Bogart wrote "The usefulness of the Community House to the people of the town and vicinity is perhaps best indicated by noting its various activities. It is used for basketball games and similar purposes by the students of the Academy, for which the Academy paid \$100 a year. In 1939 and 1940 the hall was rented for roller skating on Monday evenings, and was attended by people from far and near. During the period July 10, 1943 to July 10, 1944, 47 dances, jamborees, and other social gatherings had been held, which yielded net profits of \$605.00."

Some of those proceeds were donated to the war chest, the Red Cross and the Sons of Union Veterans for Memorial Day celebrations; the remainder went into the Association treasury.

We all had great times at the old Community House. Our skates clattered as we rolled across that big round heating register while current tunes blared out from the record player. Ask those who skated in that era; they

will smile and you will hear great stories! For instance, Ann Somers (PA '48) recalls that her classmate Albert Petrie assured her he could teach her to skate backwards. They started out but ended in a train wreck under the piano, taking several other skaters with them! Some of the better skaters at the building were Roy Munger, Delmar Petrie, and Gilmore Somers, all of Peacham.

Peacham Academy had a long-term lease of the building by 1951. Principal Sumner Dole and his students planned a 350-seat bleacher addition of the west side of the building. This addition was built and toilets, dressing room, showers, and a new heating system were installed on the lower floor. The kitchen, little dressing room and balcony were removed but you can still see their location by looking up at the ceiling on the north end of the hall.

The stairways going up from the original front entrance (opposite the Congregation Church) were closed off and a new stairway and entrance was constructed on the south end of the building. A new entrance to the lower floor was added on the east side.

The building became known as the Peacham Academy Gym when those renovations were completed. The Gym was considered about the best for basketball in the area. We all remember the many exciting games played there, our dances, proms and other school events.

The Community Association sold the property to the Caledonia County Grammar School (Peacham Academy) in 1955. The Academy continued using the Gym for many school activities until the Academy closed in 1971. The building was later conveyed to the town of Peacham for town offices.



The lower floor of the building now houses the Peacham Town Clerk and Listers' offices and the Peacham Post

Office. It is now called Peacham Town Hall. The upstairs hall, the gym, doesn't meet current requirements for basketball games; it is called "quirky." But it remains the same and if you go upstairs, close your eyes and listen hard; you may hear the clatter of roller skates, the melodies of the dance bands and the roar of the fans as the Peacham Brown Bears make a basket and win another basketball game.

## **Autograph Books Hold Precious Thoughts from Days of Old**

The manuscript collection at the Peacham Historical Association contains several autograph books that contain treasured endearments from family and friends.

The following are excerpts from a selection of the autograph books:

May Farrow, Peacham Caledonian County Grammar School, entries dated 1898 and 1890 mainly from girls in Peacham, Cabot, Barnet, and Wells River:

I will spoil but a little spot  
And simply write Forget me not

Love me little, love me long,  
Do not flirt for it is wrong

Muse not which way the pen to hold,  
Luck hates the slow and loves the old,  
Soon comes the darkness and the cold.

Mary E. Farrow, Peacham, VT 1884-1889

The time has not been long,  
Since we as strangers met,  
The sum of friendship's risen,  
May it never, never set.

In after years,  
When this you see  
I wonder what  
Your name will be.

Sure a comes your wedding day,  
A broom to you I'll send,  
In sunshine use the brushing part,  
In storm the other end."

## Peacham Patriot • Winter 2008

Peacham Historical Association  
P.O. Box 101  
Peacham, Vermont 05862  
[www.peachamhistorical.org](http://www.peachamhistorical.org)



The true Vermont tradition of caring for our community is alive and well in Peacham. The Peacham Historical Association benefits from the time and talent of a number of volunteers in addition to the officers and board members. We would like to begin recognizing them.

One such volunteer is Barbara Tillman. Barbara retired to Peacham to get away from all that heat in Texas, from where she fled in 1999. As a former librarian, she brought a number of skills to our community. As a PHA volunteer, she works in the office every week organizing the reference library, helping researchers and adding the acquisitions to the computerized data base. She also welcomes visitors to the Historical House during the summer and fall events.

In addition, Barbara works at the Peacham Congregational Church events such as the bazaar. She also likes to help her neighbors in South Peacham. The next time you see her ask about the twins next door.

Thank you, Barbara for your time and talent. It is sincerely appreciated.

*The Peacham Patriot*, published twice each year, is a benefit of membership in the PHA. The editor is Mel Reis, with assistance from Jutta Scott, Anna Rubin, Lynn Bonfield, and Lorna Quimby.

Order your copy of the award-winning *Historic Homes of Peacham!* Visit the PHA website and obtain a soft cover for \$30 or hard cover for \$40 plus \$5 shipping.

Happy Holidays!