

THE PEACHAM PATRIOT

PEACHAM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



Examples of bottles at this year's exhibition at the Historic House.

Spirited Peacham: Whiskey, Temperance, and Bootlegging

The theme of this year's public programs, both for the Historic House Exhibition and the Ghost Walk, is the complex history in Peacham of the production, control, and suppression of alcoholic beverages. We found that the objects in our collection fell into three categories: consumption and production of both cider and whiskeys by early generations; the emphasis on temperance that soon followed; and the persistence of "underground alcohol" even through the years of outright prohibition.

We learned that both early whiskey production and early temperance were led by distinguished local citizens of national prominence and distinction. While serving in the U.S. Congress, William Chamberlin, one of the early leaders of the village, improved on still design and patented his invention. His design permitted farmers to increase production dramatically, turning the

potatoes that grew on the hill farms into a nonperishable cash crop. David Merrill, minister of the Congregational Church, who held a different point of view, wrote temperance sermons reported to have been printed in an edition of over 2.5 million copies distributed nationally. These prominent individuals lived and worked in a culture full of contradictory attitudes towards alcohol, a culture shared by most of Vermont.

Early settlers of Peacham typically brought barrels of rum with them, and later filled their cellars with cider made from the many apple trees they planted. Concerned about the safety of drinking water and needing extra calories to do the extreme hard work of clearing the land, men, women and children drank pitchers of cider—cider that grew steadily stronger as it fermented in its barrels. Farmers also built stills and made whiskey. It was reported there was "a still on every farm."

The adverse effect of daily drinking "ardent spirits" soon gave rise to an equally ardent temperance movement. Peacham passed its first temperance

pledge in 1830 and became a center of writing and preaching against the consumption of alcohol. Boys and girls held "Cold Water Rallies," and supported the growing national political temperance movement. Indeed, Peacham had, in effect, a long run of abstinence: from the 1830 pledge, through 1853, when statewide prohibition was passed in Vermont, until 1933, when national prohibition was repealed.

There was always alcohol to be had, however. Most people never stopped making and drinking cider. Many remedies, tinctures, medicines and tonics were for sale in the general stores; most were very high proof, and both men and women drank them. In the 1920s, Peacham found itself an unintended witness to national Prohibition; current residents still remember their parents peeking through curtains at night to watch big black cars carrying bootleg whiskey bound from Montreal to speak-easies in the south, tearing through back roads to avoid federal agents.

JOHANNA BRANSON

DON'T FORGET !

PHA's annual meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 10 at 7 pm at the Peacham Library's new Community Center. Following the meeting at about 7:30, Adam Krakowski, author of the recently published *Vermont Prohibition: Teetotalers, Bootleggers & Corruption*, will give an illustrated talk on the history of alcohol in and around Peacham from Colonial days to the repeal of Prohibition in 1932. The event winds up with dessert: home-baked "historical" pies and coffee.

LETTER FROM THE PHA PRESIDENT

Anyone who has ever presented an exhibition to the public learns a painful lesson. After doing the background research, finding the best possible way to present the objects, and publishing the most accurate brochure possible, the exhibition opens to the public and—Presto! People instantly start telling you what you have left out and got wrong. You wish you could print a second brochure full of additions and corrections.

This is, in fact, a good lesson, if painful. After all, the goal of presenting public programs is to have people engage with your material and add to the body of shared knowledge about it.

Here at the PHA, we have adopted two ways of making what we learn “after the opening” available to all. First, we have a portion of the annual exhibition dedicated to asking visitors to help us with something that is a mystery to us. Last year, for instance, we had a “Mystery Quilt” and invited everyone who visited to tell us anything they knew about who made it and when and why. This year, we have a map of Peacham with all the stills and taverns we have been able to identify marked on it with pins; we have asked people to add pins to mark stills and taverns they know of, and to write information about them on papers we have provided.

Then, after the exhibition closes, we will write a follow-up article for the *Peacham Patriot* about what we learned. Last year, Susan Chandler wrote about the great deal we learned about our mystery quilt, including that it is a very rare example of its kind. We hope to be able to do the same with our map of stills and taverns for next March’s *Patriot*.

We may heave a sigh of relief when the exhibition opens, or the Ghost Walk is performed, but we know the work is only half done. History is always an unfinished project, and that is part of what keeps us all so engaged.

JOHANNA BRANSON, PHA President



Photo courtesy of PHA

1902 Photo of Peacham Corner School

Earlier this year, Pat Swartz, Archivist at the Fairbanks Museum in St. Johnsbury, gave the PHA a large print of a photo, printed above.

The photo is on display at PHA’s Archival and Research Center. 35.75” tall and 50” wide, the photographer showed the interior of the school, pupils soberly sitting in their seats, staring at the camera. (Peacham’s fire station incorporates the old school building on its westward side.)

We see the stovepipe from the wood-burning stove that heated the room, the two doors to the “facilities” at the back. Two flags are crossed above the blackboard. On the blackboard, in beautiful Palmer script, are the pupils’ initials. BFF stands for Benjamin Franklin Field. (He was not named for the famous man. His mother, Rhoda Gibson Field, named her third child Benjamin after a brother and Franklin after his father.) He was eleven when the photograph was taken.

Ben or Benny lived with his aunt and uncle, Martha and Harvey Jennison, on the farm across the road from the schoolhouse. They had, in 1902, three girls of their own. Harriet, the oldest, was seven. She was short, so she sat in a front seat.



The children appear to be dressed in their best. Everyone wore high button leather shoes. One small boy still had on a dress.

Usually a photographer came around the schools about Decoration Day and took pictures outside the buildings. I have one taken the same day in 1902. The students are lined up outside the building. There is a geranium blooming in the window beside the front door. One lucky boy holds the handlebars of his new bicycle. Ben Field stands near the back in front of his sister, Flora, and his brother, Charles. They must have been just visiting their aunt, for neither is listed in the School Register for that year. Nor is Harriet’s sister Vera. Only four at the time, she stands with the rest, solemnly staring at the camera. As well as the geranium, the inclusion of these “foreigners” tells much about the teacher. (This photo is also shown above.)

I hope someone can identify more of the initials or add details about the scholars.

LORNA FIELD QUIMBY

A New Butter Mold in PHA's Collection.

Paul Chandler was cleaning out an old jelly cupboard on the Chandler farm in Peacham recently when he came across a tattered old cardboard box. Inside was a smaller wooden box split apart into sections and held together with bailing twine. Inside this broken wooden frame was a beautiful carved butter mold with carved sheaves of wheat and an intricately detailed monogram. The initials were FGC, indicating that it was made for Frank Gilman Chandler (1853-1938). Lorna Quimby took a look at this mold and identified it as a Varnum-made butter mold from Peacham.

Butter molds with carved designs were used to form and stamp a block of warm butter. They were typically made of wood and featured simple designs reflecting rural life.

One of the finest butter mold makers was John Hand Varnum, who was born in Peacham in 1871 and attended Peacham Academy. After graduation he sought his fortune in the hotel industry and worked from New Hampshire to California. He returned to Peacham in the 1890s due to his father's illness. Upon his return, he began to work for James Kinerson, a well-known butter mold manufacturer here in Peacham. John Varnum learned woodworking and began to carve the print blocks for various size butter molds in a variety of patterns. Around 1900, he bought the business from Kinerson and became "the only known carver whose sole occupation was carving print blocks for butter molds."¹ John Varnum was a shrewd businessman for his day; he subcontracted the wooden cases and assembly to the workshop of James E. Smith in West Barnet and concentrated on the carving aspect himself. He also made both improvements and new blocks for other manufacturer's butter molds. His butter molds were produced in capacities from a half pound to 10 pounds of butter, and all featured the exquisite carving for which he became famous. Varnum's designs included clover leaves, grapes, strawberries, cherries, roses, wheat sheaves, acorns, ears of corn,

maple leaves, cherry blossoms, daisies, gooseberries, pears, pineapples, Indian heads, beehives, cows, horses, ducks, roosters, monograms, farm names and even a Masonic emblem. He was well-known for the crisp detailing in his carvings, his fine craftsmanship, exceptional artistic style and his signature border of a deep, defined scallop or rope pattern. Orders came from as far away as California and Florida.

Varnum's block prints were carved in white birch supplied from his camp wood lot on Martin's Pond. He cut and trimmed the trees himself, and submerged the wood in his camp well until needed. This protected the wood not only from drying out but also from insects, fungi, mold and stains. The box cases were made from maple wood supplied by James Smith, and the completed assembly was attached with brass screws.

The Chandler butter mold was split from use, as explained by Lorna Quimby. The molds were kept in salt water on farms as a sanitary precaution. After time, when the molds were no longer used, they dried out. The Chandler butter mold's brass screws deteriorated as well. Eventually, as the screws gave way, the assembled mold no longer held together. But the exquisite carving remains intact and looks as crisp today as the day it was made.

The Historic House has a wonderful display in the Industries Room of John Varnum butter molds. It is worth taking a fresh look at the beauty of these pieces. And if you live on an old local farm or enjoy going to yard sales, keep an eye out for these butter molds. Occasionally they can still be found, and are fine works of folk art representing a by-gone era.

SUSAN CHANDLER

¹ Barbara S. and Robert E. Van Vuren, *Butter Molds and Stamps*, published by Butter Press, Napa, CA, 2000.



Photo: Jock Gill

PHA Mystery Event!

On Saturday, August 27, from 4–6 pm, PHA will hold an unusual fund-raising event on the seamy side of town. Admission is by invitation only. Invitations revealing the location and the password that you will need to enter are being mailed to everyone on our list. If you don't receive one and would like to come, contact Johanna Branson at branson.johanna@gmail.com.



Please don't let this be your last issue! Beginning with the next issue, The Patriot will only be mailed to paid-up members of PHA. If your membership has lapsed, please renew it; we don't want to lose you!

Benny Field's girls. Left to right Sylvia, Mildred, Patty, June, Lorna.



Photo courtesy of Lorna Quimby

Growing Up on a Vermont Dairy Farm, Part 2

This is the second part of Marilyn Magus's conversation with Lorna Quimby. Part 1 appeared in the last issue.

M: When your father is driving you to South Peacham he presumably had some sort of vehicle. Were you going by horse or did you—how did you get there most of the time?

L: Oh, I wasn't born in the 1800s. I always wanted a pony but we never had one.

When my sister Patty was born, on their way to the hospital that morning Dad and Mother ran into what they called a dummy at the head of Eastern Avenue. It threw Mother through the windshield. Dad went into the steering wheel and broke all his ribs. Mother was still unconscious when Patty was born. The fire department was right there. They came out and saw the accident, and Mother was taken right up to the hospital and so was Dad. So he didn't have too much for a car [at first].

Roads were very bad. When my older sister was working for Waterman's in North Danville as summer help, my father would drive there. Sometimes we'd have three flats on the way. It was an adventure traveling.

M: How about the snow plowing? Would they plow at that point or would they roll with the rollers?

L: Dick can remember the last of the snow rollers, but by the time that I remember the town had a tractor, a small one, and it went all over town. They didn't start plowing until the storm stopped, so everybody would be snowed in. We were dairy farmers, and cows give milk twice a day. You'd have every container that could possibly hold some milk holding it. You had to wait for the man that picked up your milk to come with the cans and then take them to town. But first you had to have the town plow go around and the members of the road crew. One would drive the tractor; two had to walk behind and lift the wings and swing them. Those men walked miles!

M: You must have fed them when they got to your house.

L: When Mother went out one time [to get breakfast], the whole road crew was asleep on the floor around the kitchen stove. They were exhausted. Think of the miles, and this would be [during] brutal weather. After we'd been snowed in maybe a week we'd wake up in the night and hear that growl of the motor and—(loud sigh),

M: They're here.

L: Yes, they're here.

M: When you got to the South Peacham School did it change how you had recess or your activities there with the other children?

L: That was dramatically different. For one thing, down there I had a classmate my age; there was a bully, and I learned very well how low on the totem pole I was. When you can't see the ball you're the last one to be picked and nobody wanted you on their team, but

then there were people I could interact [with]. We girls would bring our dolls to school; the maple trees had wonderful roots where we could have little houses, and so we would play during the recess. We just tore out of school; the teacher never came out and supervised us.

M: Even if there was a fight or anything?

L: No, you settled it yourself. You made your own rules. The big [problem] was—I call her the fat girl—the bully. She loved to get the other kids in a group, and choose a target. It was a moving target; it wasn't always one person. If it wasn't me it was someone else. There were two girls whose father was the Japanese minister, and they were a favorite target of hers. She'd get the kids and they'd stand around [yelling] "Jap, Jap". My sister Sylvia would not put up with that. She and I would go and sit with the Japanese girls and at least let them know that not everybody was like that.

M: When winter came did you do any sliding out there?

L: Oh, that was fun. [The boys] would tread down a sliding path down the school yard, across the road, down through the field. They would pack it down until it was icy. You could go like the devil. So we'd get dressed and we ran out—we gobbled our lunch and tore out and got on our sleds and got in as many slides as we could. We'd go way down across the field and then we walked up. [The town] put up snow fencing in the fields and the snow would drift over those so that the roads were not full of snow. It would pack up and make wonderful snow to make snow caves or tunnels in. And we raised the money to bring electricity into the school. We raised \$100.

M: How did you do it?

L: We gave an operetta and we sold Dixie cups full of ice cream that came out on dry ice from St. Johnsbury, from Hood's. Everybody supported us. We had wooden shoes; we painted the backdrops; it was The Pied Piper of

Hamelin. The third graders were the rats. They had brown paper hats and little ears and little tails out behind. It was fun; everybody had a wonderful time.

M: Was your family involved with the church in town?

L: My mother and her mother, Flora Wilson [Miles], were Methodists and they went to the Methodist Church, which is now the gym. Dad went to the Congregational Church. They'd had a wonderful minister, the Reverend Warner. We've never had one like him since. He went fishing with the farmers. When he came for a funeral he would weep. And mother remembered that--when you have a baby in church it's frowned upon if they cry, and he wanted her to feel at ease, that the baby had a place there and so did she. After Warner came the Japanese minister who was supported by the local summer people because he was educated like they were; he played tennis with them. But; there was a lot [of local prejudice]. Minakuchi was here trying to foster friendship between the two nations. He was actually interned during the Second World War but they [soon] released him. His daughter, who came back at our 200th [anniversary], said her father had always felt that he had been used by the military there in Japan. As I say, there was a lot of local [prejudice]. Carolyn Martin Long was married at home by a minister from away because Will Martin was not going to have a Japanese marry [her].

M: As you were growing up what were your chores at home?

L: Mostly it was household chores during the winter. We set the table. My older sisters learned to cook with my mother, but I didn't because in the summer I was Dad's boy, as they said. Everything was done by hand--hayng for example. Dad cut the hay down with a mower; and he had a side delivery rake where he raked the windrows. We had to bunch them for Dad to pitch onto the load and we'd go all around the field doing this. My older sister could keep right up with Dad but I was way behind. Then I would stand on the hay

wagon while Dad would pitch the hay up to me. [Then] he would unload it. We girls would be down in the bay, treading it down so we could get as much hay as possible in the barn. In hot weather, we'd drink gallons of Kool Aid and cold water from the milk house. Then there was cultivating. We would ride the horse and guide her and Dad would have the cultivator behind. He walked and walked and walked and walked-- the miles he walked!

M: Where did you learn how to cook? I mean, it sounds like your older sisters were doing the cooking. Were you involved in that at all?

L: No, I was in the barn; I was out playing, or whatever. When [Mother] made rhubarb pie, she would send my sister Sylvia and me out to the rhubarb patch to bring in the rhubarb. She had us do a lot of errands for her.

M: And did she quilt? I know you've quilted a lot.

L: I picked that up later. But I do remember [that] Sylvia and I [helped Mother with her butterfly quilt]. She bought a block of [fabric] cut out in a butterfly shape from an advertisement in a magazine.. We did buttonhole stitch around them onto squares of cotton, and when we finished we had all these butterflies [for the quilt]. I imagine you could tell the difference between the ones I had done and the ones Sylvia had done because she could see and she was older. We had to do [one of] those before we could go to play, and she'd get through hers much faster than I. I would be trying to go as fast as I could, and one time I sewed [my square] to my stocking, so I had to take all those stitches out. That's how I learned to do buttonhole stitch.

Where was the Stockade?

Jock Gill has been researching the location of military fortifications in Peacham from 1776-1782 and is hoping a reader might be able to help shed some light on the subject.

Jock writes:

“The historic monument on the Bayley Hazen road just north the Elkins Tavern indicates that a blockhouse was constructed in the field to the east of the monument and south of the present observatory. However, young Jonathan Elkins, the son of the settler, wrote that there was a stockade around the elder Jas. Bayley house “a mile south of my father’s place.” (This is shown as cellar hole 292 on the Don Wilcox map of 1964, on an enlarged copy of the 1944 map made by Louise Bayley, and on the 1875 Beers map.) It is said that the stockade around the house was built in 1780 by Captain Aldrich and that up to 50 men were stationed there from 1780-1782.

“The earliest records I have found indicate that a blockhouse was built in 1776, the year the Hazen Military Road reached Peacham, but was abandoned that fall (see the history of the Hazen

Military Road by Frederick W. Baldwin, published in the *Vermont*, vol. XI, no. 16, (1906.) Construction of the road was suspended in the fall of 1776, which may account for the abandonment. When construction of the road was resumed in April, 1779, a stockade was built in the Cabot Plains at a site which is marked today. I suspect the stockade around the Bayley house was intended to replace the earlier structure and to protect the 19 settlers then living in the southern parts of Peacham. (This settlement pattern can be seen by comparing the list of settlers and their lots as of July 1780 with the Elkins pocket map of Peacham lots from about 1815. The originals of both of these documents are in the Peacham Town Vault.) “If 50 men were stationed at or near the Bayley house, there had to be water for them. Cedric Farrow showed me a site on the old Farrow farm where there is evidence of an old cellar hole and a water source. This site is about 1.2 miles south of the Elkins Tavern near where the stockade was located according to Col Elkins. The site is between the Farrow Farm Road on the east and the Peacham-Groton Road on the west, just as the old maps suggest. Much more work needs to be done to establish if

this could be the site of the stockade around the old Jas. Bayley house.

“I am hoping that one or more readers of *The Patriot* will be able to contribute items that might help solve the mystery.”

JOCK GILL

Senator Sanders Salutes PHA

The following letter addressed to Johanna Branson arrived at PHA late last winter.

I would like to offer my warmest congratulations to you and the entire Peacham Historical Association on receiving an Award of Excellence from the Vermont Historical Society. This award recognizes your organization’s outstanding work to develop the Lorna Field Quimby Archives and Research Center. I thank you and your coworkers for your exceptional contributions to preserving Vermont’s history, and I have no doubt that your passion for historical preservation has been an inspiration for others in the Peacham community.

I join with your friends, your family, and community in congratulating you on received this prestigious honor.

Sincerely,
Bernard Sanders
United States Senate



Photo: Jock Gill

19th Annual Ghost Walk

Making its annual appearance at Peacham's July 4 festivities, the Ghost Walk was a spectacular success. The theme was "Spirited Peacham" and featured four ghosts related in some way to the town's history of spirits (the hard kind).

General William Chamberlin (1755-1828), impersonated by Steve Galinat, fought in the Revolutionary War, made a fortune selling real estate in and around Peacham, held numerous public offices, and during his term in the U.S. Congress developed and patented his design for an improved column still capable of making whiskey in large amounts.

Orman Parker Hooker (1818-85), reputed to have operated the last working still on his farm in Peacham, described how he was convinced of the error of his ways. The new Methodist Minister J. N. Hume, visited the farm in 1839, asked for a tour, discovered the still, and then placed the curse of God on it. Hooker was said to have been converted on the spot. Alfred Dedam portrayed Hooker with great humor.

Mary Grandin Hunt Merrill (1806-61), like her husband, Congregational Minister David Merrill, was a fervent advocate for temperance. Rev. Merrill's sermons on the subject were famous. Both were active in the Peacham Temperance Society and organized Cold Water Rallies. Mary was played with panache by Ariel Zevon.

Eloise Bayley Miller (1917-2013), played by her daughter Jean Dedam, grew up in East Peacham during Prohibition. She shared childhood memories of bootleggers' big black cars racing through the back roads near her family's farm late at night seeking to evade revenue agents on their way from Montreal to Boston and New York.

Many other volunteers contributed to the event's success. Dart Thalman and Johanna Branson coordinated. Marilyn Magnus, Jutta Scott, Brad Toney, and Jock Gill were docents. Lorna Quimby was the historical advisor. Hattie Thresher sold tickets.

"Spirited Peacham" is the theme of all PHA summer activities, including

the exhibit at the Historical House (see article p. 1); the August 10 annual meeting speaker, Adam Krakowski, author of *Vermont Prohibition: Teetotalers, Bootleggers & Corruption*; and a mystery event at an undisclosed location on August 27 (see notice on p. 3). The Ghost Walk will be repeated on Fall Foliage Day, September 29.

JANE ALPER

Top: Ariel Zevon as Mary Grandin Hunt Merrill.

Bottom: Steve Galinat as William Chamberlin.



Photos: Julie Lang

Proposed Changes to PHA Membership

At PHA's annual meeting on August 10, members will be asked to approve proposed changes to membership categories and dues. The changes are intended to simplify the present system by eliminating most categories and establishing a uniform dues payment for everyone. For folks who don't want the bother of renewing every year, we have kept the option of a lifetime membership at the same rate.

The changes are explained in the following chart:

Present System		Proposed System	
Single membership	\$10	Single or family membership	\$15*
Senior membership	\$5	Lifetime membership	\$250
Family membership	\$15		
Lifetime membership	\$250		

**If the new dues amount is more than you think you can afford, please feel free to renew at the old level. What's most important to PHA is your membership. Please join; we need you.*

As PHA Membership Director Betsy Smith pointed out in her most recent letter, members enjoy benefits not available to other donors: free subscription to the *Peacham Patriot* and the right to vote at the annual meeting. More important in our view, membership demonstrates a commitment to the goals and vision of PHA, sort of like becoming a citizen. Membership also helps PHA in a tangible way. The number of members is the way we demonstrate community support when we apply for grants and other forms of outside support.

Given rising costs for printing and mailing the Patriot, we will be sending future issues only to paid up members. We don't want to remove anyone from our mailing list and encourage everyone to renew today if you haven't already done so. For more information or to renew, contact Betsy Smith at betsys69@gmail.com or PHA at PO Box 101, Peacham, VT 05862.

And thank you for your generous support of PHA!

The ARC research hours through September are Mondays from 10:00 to noon and by appointment which can be made with Lynn Bonfield, 802-592-3249.

PHA Board 2015

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The Peacham Patriot

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