THE **PEACHAM** PATRIOT PEACHAM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

New Book Celebrates PHA's 100th Anniversary

o commemorate Peacham Historical Association's centennial, we are publishing a new book: Preserving Peacham's Past: 100 Years of Collecting by the Peacham Historical Association. The full-color book features the most intriguing 100 items from PHA's diverse historical collections. The book is the result of the work of many individuals. The primary authors are Board members Johanna Branson, Susan Chandler, and Jutta R. Scott. Jock Gill was our photographer and Jane Alper the editor. Joanna Bodenweber created the design for the book. Each of the 100 objects is presented with a color image and information about its place in Peacham's history.

We had a clear goal when we started this book. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the PHA's founding on August 11, 1921, we set out to showcase 100 objects from our remarkable collections. Our goal was to identify and describe wonderful items— wonderful

in terms of their historic meaning and/ or in terms of their physical beauty. We were open-minded about criteria, so long as the object would lead our readers to a deeper appreciation of this

Over 100 years of collecting, the PHA has built a substantial collection of documents, letters, family papers, photographs, maps, manuscripts, archives, textiles, art works, tools, and other objects that document the history of Peacham since its settlement in 1776. Choosing the most important items was a journey of discovery and difficult choices.

Along the way, we discovered that we had many objects that were new to us. What we found and have included in the book is astonishing: the founding document of the town, the Proprietors' Agreement from 1764; a red box containing the correspondence of the earliest members of the Congregational Church in their roles as arbiters of town disputes; two carpet bags, one of which was carried in the Civil War by

Annual meeting on Wednesday, August 11 at 7 p.m.

Please join us for a brief annual meeting on Wed., August 11, in the Library Community Room. Hear about our many activities last year and our future plans, help elect some new board members and officers, and come to support PHA.

the town doctor; a book of 1851 land surveys of properties in Peacham; and many more fascinating objects. As the new objects appeared, limiting ourselves to the number 100 began to be a constraint.

We therefore decided to mark PHA's centennial by showcasing only objects made before the founding of PHA in 1921. Currently, PHA's website, peachamhistorical.org, is presenting a selection of images from the book over the next few months. We will launch the book, which tells the stories behind those images, at a special celebration on August 8. For information about this event please check PHA's website. The book will be available for purchase after that date from PHA, the Craft Guild, the Library, and the Carriage House. The purchase price is \$35.00 This book is a real celebration of the early years of Peacham. We hope that you will enjoy it a fraction as much as we have enjoyed creating it.



The cover of Preserving Peacham's Past: 100 Years of Collecting by the Peacham Historical Association.

PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

ike thousands of musicians, actors and performers everywhere, we have missed the smiling faces behind those multicolored masks! We have had trouble getting organized and back to our "normal" routines without the audience. We are proud that with 80% of Vermonters vaccinated, we can open our doors and welcome back our old and new friends! It was such a great feeling on July 4th seeing many friendly faces (over 90 in fact) who visited the Historical House for this year's exhibit, Remembering Peacham Academy – The Heart of Peacham. This exhibit commemorates the Academy's 225- year history since it opened in 1797, the 50 years since the final class of 1971 graduated, and the final meeting of the Alumni Association this summer I find it amazing that 45 years after the main building burned, the Academy's influence and impact on the town of Peacham lives on. Even the younger people in town talk about the Academy as if it were destroyed only a week or so ago. That shows the power and strength of history. We are proud to celebrate these milestones.

Since the Covid restrictions were lifted so quickly, we were unable to pull together a Ghost Walk this year. Please stay tuned as we begin to plan out next year's offerings. Meanwhile, I hope you enjoyed this year's Quest: *The Stories We Tell: Freedom and Equity in Peacham*, another great joint venture with Peacham Library.

The PHA marks 100 years since incorporating on August 11, 1921. It began with a humble group of 20 persons who met in 1916 to form a Historical Society with the goal of writing a history of Peacham. The process was slow

but purposeful, taking three years to formulate and write the by-laws and mission statement before filing for incorporation. Those principles are still at the core of our existence: To Preserve, Protect and Present the Vast History of Peacham. We are honoring these traditions with a new book, Preserving Peacham's Past: 100 Years of Collecting by the Peacham Historical Association. This is a full color book filled with pictures and just enough documentation to spark your interest in history. It features 100 of the most remarkable pre-1921 objects in our collection. The book will be available at our celebratory Gala featuring the music of Vermont's own Pete Sutherland. This event is being held on August 8th. If you haven't received your invitation, please call the Historical Association or me, Steve Galinat.

Over the years we've heard the statements: "What goes around comes around" or" History just repeats itself." There is some truth in those words. In 1918 the Spanish Flu pandemic brought much of the world to a standstill, and now in 2020 the Covid 19 virus has done much the same. Whenever there is a disaster, we hear that we must investigate, determine the cause and work to make sure it never happens again. I prefer to think that by learning and preserving our past we can build a brighter future. It is our goal. With your continued support and volunteering we can continue to collect, preserve, protect, and present the history of Peacham for the next century.

There are a number of people who have worked to help make this summer's programs and our participation in "Sundays in Peacham" possible. Many special thanks to the following:

The Blacksmith Shop: Ed Schneider, Evan Perkins, Ralph Crocker, Gavin Miller

The Historical House stairs: Rusty Barber, Dave Stauffer, Ralph Crocker The Historical House exhibit: Frank Miller, Patrice McDonough, Gary Schoolcraft, Susan Chandler, Dean Bornstein, Karen Lewis

Helping at the ARC: Cecelia Kane, Diane Travis

The Quest: Johanna Branson, Susan Smolinsky

100th Anniversary book Preserving Peacham's Past: 100 Years of collecting by the Peacham Historical Association: Jutta Scott, Beatrice Ring, Johanna Branson Susan Chandler, Joanna Bodenweber, Jock Gill, Jane Alper

Lorna's Garden talk: Marsha Garrison, Betsy McKay

2021 100th Anniversary Gala: Frank Miller Patrice McDonough, PHA Board, Pete Sutherland

PHA Website: Terry Miller

SPECIAL Thanks to Jane Alper, our Patriot editor and recording secretary

SPECIAL Thanks to Dart Thalman for his many roles over the years: officer, Ghost Walk coordinator, and longtime Board member.

AND to anyone I may have missed, Thank you!

STEVE GALINAT, PHA President



One of the stops on The Quest: The Stories We Tell: Freedom and Equity in Peacham.

Quest II The Stories We Tell: Freedom and Equity in Peacham

Given the unusual circumstances due to COVID regarding social distancing in 2020, the PHA and the Peacham Library worked together to develop an alternative to their usual summer programming. What emerged was a treasure hunt-style quest that could be done in safe groups; we called it *Pandemics of Peacham's Past*. We decided that we were in a good position to offer our village some historical perspective regarding infectious disease. It proved to be very popular, and we extended the run from 10 days to 3 weeks.

At the same time as the pandemic, we were also witnessing the upswelling of concern regarding race and racism in the United States. We knew that our archives contained valuable information regarding that history and began to plan a second quest for 2021. Over the winter of 2020-2021, as we were preparing our 100th anniversary book for the PHA, we discovered additional, material, new to us, relating to race. Our understanding of the way race has been seen by villagers is evolving as we learn more about how our attitudes, beliefs and practices changed over the centuries since 1776.

The Stories We Tell: Freedom and Equity in Peacham grew to be a quest comprising 14 sites in the village, scheduled for July 3–18, 2021, with a possible extension planned in the fall for 5th and 6th graders at the Peacham School. Although the stories are many, and evolving, we should note that the "we" in The Stories We Tell refers mostly to white people, as it is their stories that were written down, collected, and preserved by the Peacham Historical Association, especially during its early years.

Some of our discoveries in the archives led us to understand that even in this remote village, language about race changed profoundly in the years after settlement. To give one example, a document recording the purchase of church pews in 1806 was described using overtly racist language in centennial

celebration programs in 1895, language that was absent in the original document. A similar shift occurred when Jonathan Elkins, Jr.'s journal recording his interactions with Native People, a document that describes them as individuals with whom he had good relations, was misrepresented in a printed speech dedicating a historical marker in 1924, where lurid stereotypes were substituted. Another chilling discovery: in the archives regarding David Merrill, the respected second pastor of the Congregational Church, a copy of Eugenics magazine was found, in which (50 years after his death) he was turned into a role model for this horrific movement.

We have also attempted to raise broad issues of Vermont history using specific examples from Peacham. For instance, it is often repeated that Vermont is nearly the whitest state, second only to Maine. The reasons given for this usually center around two things: Vermont's constitution was the first to ban slavery, so that relatively few descendants of enslaved people live here; and the state had few jobs to attract either Black people from the south escaping Jim Crow or more recent immigrant populations.

This narrative is part of the truth, but there are other stories to tell. It ignores the facts that there were native people here before and after European settlement, that the Vermont constitution did not ban slavery of people under 21 and was in practice full of loopholes, and that efforts to draw new populations to the state were always aimed at white people. Peacham itself was marketed as an ideal summer destination in this way.

Another, happier part of the story told in the quest is that Peacham played a significant role in the movement to abolish slavery and sent more men to fight and die in the Civil War, per capita, than any other town in the Union. Following the lead of the legions of enslaved people who worked for abolition, Peacham sent two of its finest Academy students—Thaddeus Stevens and Oliver Johnson—on to careers that influenced its success in significant ways. These are things about which children growing up here should feel very proud.



One of the stops on The Quest: The Stories We Tell: Freedom and Equity in Peacham.

We are so fortunate to live in a place where our history can be rethought and re-examined. Often historical evidence is destroyed, sometimes accidentally, sometimes intentionally. Peacham has experienced both. Parts of the original PHA collections were lost when the Library burned in 1959. And at least one historian writing about the people of Peacham left out the families she thought were not "good enough," including people of color. But we have managed to collect and preserve enough to give us a rich source of documents and objects, allowing us to keep thinking about the stories we tell. As members of an organization committed to public programming, we believe it is invaluable to be able to lead visitors to actual sites where history occurred, and to use information from records made by the town's own people to reflect on that history.

JOHANNA BRANSON

Note: The same team developed this quest as the one in 2020: Johanna Branson, board member of both the PHA and the Library, did the research to develop content and identify sites; Jenny Mackenzie, Library board member, wrote the quest signs and directions; Craig Harrison, Library board member, designed all quest materials, including signs, flyers, and maps; Susan Smolinsky, Librarian, developed web site instructions and announcements and made the whole project operational; Gillian Sewake, Library Board President, offered invaluable feedback on language, and developed press releases, and The Peacham Café offered a prize to contestants who solved the quest riddle.

Remembering Peacham Academy:The Heart of Peacham

he Historical House opened this season with an exhibit featuring Peacham Academy. Chartered by the Vermont legislature in 1795 as the Caledonia County Grammar School (CCGS), the Academy opened its doors in 1797 and continuously went about the business of educating thousands of young people from Peacham and beyond for 175 years. Commonly known as Peacham Academy, the school was forced to close due to financial issues in 1971, and the venerable Academy building was consumed by fire in 1976. 2021 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the graduation of the last class to attend Peacham Academy.

The Peacham Historical Association celebrates this incredibly important facet of Peacham history. Today, within the quiet confines of Peacham Village, it is difficult to imagine the impact the school had on the community.

The Physical Footprint of Peacham Academy: Originally, in 1797, the Academy consisted of a single two-story

30 x 40-foot building located where the current Soldier's Monument now stands. The space was shared with the church and the town. Students who came from locations away from Peacham were housed in the homes of local residents. In 1842, the original Academy building was demolished and a new structure was built on the green in the Village center.

Over the years, the needs of the Academy grew and it came to include five dormitories, a gymnasium, a science building, a camp at Martin's Pond, the tennis court, and the Dr. Luther Fletcher Parker Athletic Field. Students were also housed in at least four other homes in the community. In addition, students used local recreation facilities, including the Peacham Ski Hill where the ski team trained and competed, the Fire Pond where students ice skated in the winter, and Devil's Hill in Groton State Forest, where hikes would take place.

Local businesses and services including the library, general store, post office, and church served the students and staff of Peacham Academy in meeting their day-to-day needs. Some students took summer and part-time jobs at local farms and businesses. To the left of the main entrance inside the Historical House is a collection of photographs that show many of the buildings that made up the core of Peacham Academy. The evolution of the primary Academy building is interesting to follow, from the original building built in 1795 and demolished in 1842, to the new, pillared one-story structure from 1842, then to the addition of a second story in 1886, the addition of a basement level in 1906 and finally a large addition in 1937.

The Social Footprint of Peacham

Academy: Beyond the primary business of educating and preparing young people for life's journey, the Academy was also a center for the social life of the community. During the school year, the Academy offered a constant array of sporting events, musical presentations, theater, dances, and other activities such as the annual Winter Carnival, that were open to the Peacham community.

In the center of the Historical House exhibition is a display case filled with mementos from Peacham Academy's rich sports history – there are trophies, photographs, signed baseballs, sports gear, and numerous other items. There is also a table displaying a collection of



the student newsletter, "The Beehive," as well as announcements of theater events, numerous school clubs, and more.

And not to be overlooked, especially at a time when travel was slow and cumbersome, the Academy served as a place where students and staff alike were presented with a broad collection of eligible young men and women to be considered as potential partners in life. Many marriages resulted for couples who met at Peacham Academy!

The exhibit also features a collection of photos by Clemens Kalischer that show students participating in social activities at the Academy.

The Peacham Academy Alumni Association: Since its formation in 1897 at the time of the Academy's centennial celebration, the Alumni Association has done much to preserve the history of Peacham Academy. After the Academy building burned in 1976, a group of dedicated alumni recognized the importance of reorganizing the Association to reflect the new reality. Since that time, they have tirelessly supported the alumni and the precious memories of Peacham Academy.

The Peacham Alumni will celebrate their final reunion during the weekend of July 30-August 1, 2021.

The Historical House exhibit this year is crafted from a vast array of items that have been collected by PHA over the years, including many items donated by the Alumni Association. As one enters this year's exhibit, the eye is drawn upward to the bright gold and brown pennants emblazoned with the letters CCGS [Caledonia County Grammar School] and the year of each graduating class, in a tradition that started at the time of the centennial celebration in 1896 and continued through the closing of the school in 1971.

There is also a replica of the main Peacham Academy building that was constructed by the St. Johnsbury Academy Building Trades classes and was dedicated at the alumni reunion in 1995. The replica is available for viewing on request.



The Peacham Academy damask banquet tablecloth donated to the alumni in 1897 for the centennial is on display. The donor was Mr. Benjamin Franklin Stevens, a remarkably successful dealer in rare books living in London at the time. For many years, the tablecloth was on display at the Academy and used for banquets and special events.

The exhibition includes a portrait of Dr. Luther Fletcher Parker, who walked from Coventry, VT to Peacham in the early 1840s, carrying his possessions, to get an education. He later went to college and became a doctor. He settled in Peacham and was a physician here for many years. He remained active with Peacham Academy, serving as the President of the Board of Trustees. After his death, the family donated the Dr. Luther Fletcher Parker Athletic Field to the Academy.

There are many more items to see, including vintage class photographs, diplomas, a graduation gown, sports uniforms, a beautiful cape worn in a 1909 play at the Academy, a collection of catalogues that were issued each year, copies of the Spotlight (the annual Academy yearbook), and an auction bill announcing the sale of the Academy contents after its closing in 1971. At the end of the exhibit – a large American flag hangs on the wall, the last flag to fly over Peacham Academy.



(top) Class photos and team uniform.

(above) Auction bill and flag.

The exhibit will be open on Sundays from 1-3 PM through Labor Day weekend and on some special occasions, including Peacham's Fall Foliage Day and the Peacham Academy Alumni reunion on July 31st.

Frank Miller

Much of the information reported here was taken from the book *Peacham Academy—1795-1971* written by Lorna Field Quimby (PA '43) and published by the Peacham Academy Alumni Association. This book is available for purchase at the Historical House emporium.



The Red Box: Voices from Peacham's Past

he archives of the Peacham Historical Association contain a collection of Peacham Congregational Church documents. Among these documents sat a simple, tattered red cardboard box. Tucked inside this box was a treasure trove of early Congregational Church documents, including the correspondence of Peacham's first ministers. These documents provide a unique glimpse into the daily lives of local residents and the personal thoughts of Leonard Worcester and David Merrill, the first two ministers of the church. Reverend Worcester seems to have made hand-written copies of important letter for his file. This is how we know what he was thinking and how he responded to the issues raised by his flock.

The red box contained several hundred documents tightly folded and tied together with string. Included was the original hand-written church charter of 1794 and also minutes from the first religious meetings held in local homes. The earliest documented meeting took place in July of 1790 at the home of James Bailey, and baptisms were recorded as early as October of 1792. The red box contents are still being studied, but we have divided them into several categories. There is correspondence with other local churches, includ-

ing requests for assistance to settle disputes. These include letters requesting that Deacon Elkins mediate a dispute between the Haverhill and Newbury churches. There are letters in favor of and against transfers of church membership from other areas. Some of these letters contain little-known facts about Peacham residents, including details about why a person was not worthy of church membership. There are detailed reports from missionaries describing their activities in the Midwest and the Dakota Territory.

Another category of documents consists of statements of "relation," which recount a member's life journey to seek and fully commit to the Lord. There are also two types of confession letters. The first are similar to letters of relation where one confesses general sins and commits to the Lord. The second are confessions of specific acts, often the result of accusations made against the person and documented in letters sent to the church.

We have dozens of letters with accusations and grievances. These complaints describe activities of family members, other church members, and even other residents in the community. A few letters involve other towns and inquiries into events which occurred there. These letters reveal not only the strict control which the church had over the community but also the troubled lives of early settlers.

The Congregational Church functioned similarly to a court of law, with investigatory power, trials, and even punishment in the form of public confession or excommunication. Reverend Worcester, in a letter dated May 1832, sharply reminded two sisters who had left the church that in joining the church, there was a sacred covenant "promising that [they] would be subject to its disciplining" and "the watchfulness" of its members. Reverend Worcester went on to rebuke the sisters, adding that he wished to "not be unkindly."

Letters of accusation sometimes invoked scripture as justification for the charges being levied. Generally, the accuser(s) recounted the efforts made to deal with the situation on a personal level. Sometimes the accuser employed the assistance of a local attorney or town official. If that failed and no other solution could be found, a letter of complaint was sent to the church. There are many simple legal disputes detailed in the records, often involving non-payment of debts and disputes over land deeds and leases.

There are also letters outlining issues with cattle and horses. Several letters describe how cattle were pushed into a grain field in anger or in retribution. This was a serious offense, and in 1803, Abijah Bailey was excommunicated from the church after he spoke abusive language and "drove James Calder's cattle into his field of wheat." There is

also a detailed description of a pair of oxen being sold and the original owner stealing them back after finding they were abused.

Another group of letters involve accusations of foul language, intemperance, the "drinking of ardent spirits," taverngoing, gambling, and intimidation. There are letters which deal with "not living according to Christian laws" or not attending church on the Sabbath. One was not permitted to visit, travel or do business on the Sabbath.

Numerous letters outline accusations of "gossip against others" and "promoting falsehoods." An undated letter describes a series of complaints against Perry Farrow and his wife Cynthia by John C. Dunbar. John Dunbar accused the Farrows of "spreading untruths, mischiefmaking (sic), sowing discord in the neighborhood and keeping a bad house." Lists of witnesses were included for each offense, and the church assigned a group of members to fully investigate the matter. Their report to the church found that the witnesses actually "had mixed testimony" and that the Farrows did not keep a "bad house." The report does, however, state that "Sister Farrow sometimes has used too much freedom in speaking of her neighbors" and had "induce(d) hard feelings."

In an undated letter, likely from the 1820s, Ziba Johnson wrote that Mrs. Mary Runnels was guilty of falsehood when she "pretends to have been a number of times, and to have conversed with, the departed Spirits (sic) of Miss Deborah Chamberlin, who departed several years ago." The letter relates Mrs. Runnels' claim that the spirit had told her that she and Mr. Bolton "had been criminally intimate with each other." Mrs. Runnels also declared that Mr. William Bolton had "seen his deceased mother" and confessed that intimacy to her, stating that he "did not think it so sinful." The spirit also informed Mrs. Runnels that Mary Chamberlin "would never go from Mr. Bolton's." Ziba confronted Mrs. Runnels and was "given no satisfaction." He provided witnesses and took the matter to the church. We have not found the results of the church investigation yet.

There were also serious abuse accusations. Several letters describe domestic abuse in the home of William Carter and his wife Elizabeth. Dr. Shedd requested the assistance of the church. Col. Joel Walker, Dr. Shedd, and C. W. Bloss, Esq. all investigated the matter on behalf of Rev. Worcester. Col. Walker found that William Carter "does not observe the Saboth (sic), spends most of his time at the Tavern and does not help with the children. There is little religious instruction in the home." When Mrs. Carter spoke to him about this, she was "struck with a severe blow on the side of her head which nearly [illegible] her to the floor." She also intervened when her husband inflicted "unreasonable and severe punishment on the children." Mr. Carter acknowledged these facts, but Dr. Shedd noted that Mrs. Carter would continually "aggravate her husband with unreasonable complaints," so that he could not spend time at home. Col. Walker noted that "she wishes to live (if for nothing else) to torment him." Eventually Reverend Worcester intervened and admonished Mrs. Carter that wives must "submit themselves to their husbands," but also reprimanded Mr. Carter for unkindness towards his wife "with anger and violence to inflict a blow for a blow."

In October of 1818, Rev. Worcester received a letter from Rutherford Bailey. Mr. Bailey complained that Stephen Hopkins had "treated a certain child under his care by the name of Alpheus Woodard in a cruel and abusive manner." Later, Mr. Hopkins made a short public confession. Alpheus Woodard had been indentured when he was twelve, and eventually was listed as a runaway in the Danville *North Star* newspaper.

There are accusations of adultery and bigamy. In January of 1851, writing from the Midwest, Reverend John Mattocks angrily noted that divorce is legal there, and that the disappearance of a spouse after ten years "permits the presumption of death." He then reviled a Mrs. Sampson, stating that "Mrs. Sampson was a married woman with a lawful husband still living (by the Laws (sic) of this state) when she married Mr. Watts—and was liable in this state for bigamy or adultery." Rev. Mattocks goes on to discuss prostitution, adultery, and

various punishments, including death. The details of this case are unclear. According to *People of Peacham*, Thomas Watts married Jane Bayley in 1811. After her death in 1830 or 1832 he married her sister, Sarah Bayley Sam(p)son, the same year, and they moved to Illinois.

In 1858, Mr. John Hand, a church member, was arrested by the County Court on charges "clearly involving his moral character," and he sent a letter of "withdrawal from approaching the Lord's table." In his full public letter of confession to the church, dated February of 1866, John Hand expressed his remorse for "a particular transaction with others in aiding to procure an abortion on the body of Abby Davidson..."

Finally, there are letters regarding the removal of church members affiliated with Free Masonry. Some of them finally repented and sought to rejoin the church. Reverend Worcester dictated a public statement to be read by each returning member, stating that they completely renounced and disavowed all affiliation with Free Masonry.

The red box still contains dozens of letters to be unfolded and read. Reverend Sonia Dunbar, the current pastor of the Peacham Congregational Church, has begun the arduous task of carefully unfolding, sorting and creating an inventory of the red box contents. There are preliminary plans underway to catalog and preserve this collection for further research.

Undoubtedly there will more stories to share with you.

Susan Chandler

Additional Sources

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Contributors: Johanna Branson, Susan Chandler, Steve Galinat, Frank Miller

Photography: Jock Gill

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Wine and Cheese Party with Live Music

Join us for an outdoor extravaganza on **Sunday, August 8 from 4–6**. We will enjoy a variety of delectable foods, drinks both alcoholic and not, good company, and some special attractions: a performance by fiddler/song writer Pete Sutherland and a chance to look at (and buy) PHA's brand new 100th anniversary book.

If you haven't received your invitation, call us at 592-3049 or email us from our website, peachamhistorical.org.



Pete Sutherland

A warm voiced singer-songsmith and accomplished multi-instrumentalist, Pete is known equally for his potent originals and his intense recreations of age-old ballads and fiery fiddle tunes. The American Festival of Fiddle Tunes said Pete "covers the map and shines with a ... pure spirit which infuses every bit of his music, and cannot fail to move all who hear him." He has been on staff at dance and music camps coast to coast and is a widely known year-round teacher and performer at home.

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