

THE PEACHAM PATRIOT

PEACHAM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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Susan Chandler, Johanna Branson, Jock Gill, Steve Galinet, and Jutta Scott with Steve Perkins, Executive Director of Vermont Historical Society.

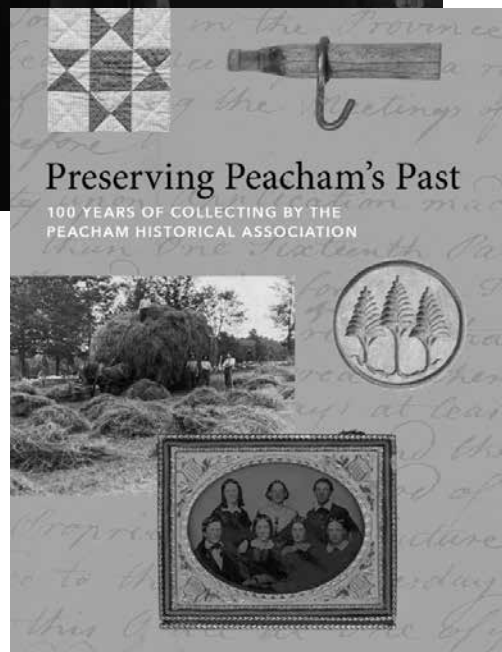
PHA Receives Award of Excellence for Preserving Peacham's Past

The Vermont Historical Society League of Historical Societies and Museums (LLHSM) selected PHA's *Preserving Peacham's Past: 100 Years of Collecting by the Peacham Historical Association* as the 2021 Award of Excellence winner.

Published in July, 2021, *Preserving Peacham's Past* commemorates PHA's centennial by showcasing 100 objects from PHA's extensive collections. Each featured object is briefly described and accompanied by a color image. The objects include an issue of Caledonia County's first newspaper, a red box

containing correspondence of early members of the Congregational Church in their roles as arbiters of town disputes, and two carpet bags, one of which was carried in the Civil War by the town doctor. The primary authors of the volume are PHA Board members Johanna Branson, Susan Chandler, and Jutta R. Scott. Jock Gill was the photographer and Jane Alper the editor. Joanna Bodenweber created the design for the book.

The award was presented at the LLHSM Annual Meeting in October, 2021. In explaining why PHA won this prestigious award, LLHSM praised the book's editing and design as well as PHA's "unique approach" to documenting its legacy in a way that "brings



vibrancy to what might otherwise be a bland retelling of activities from the last century" and offers a "robust model" for other Vermont historical societies. The book is available for purchase for \$35 at the Peacham Library, the Peacham Craft Guild (when it reopens), and online at www.peachamhistorical.org.

PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

Despite the constraints and unpredictability of the past year, we learned quite a lot about how to manage programs during a pandemic and succeeded in producing some remarkably successful ones. I am so proud of the accomplishments and ongoing activities of the volunteers and Board.

We produced an award-winning publication, *Preserving Peacham's Past*, a successful Historic House exhibit *Peacham Academy – The Heart of Peacham*, and a new, very timely 14-site Quest, *The Stories We Tell: Freedom and Equity in Peacham*. Thanks to Frank Miller, our summer wine-and-cheese fundraiser included musical entertainment by Pete Sutherland. To honor long-time PHA President Lorna Quimby, we sponsored a tour of Lorna's Garden and a talk describing how it was designed and created. For the very first time, we opened a Spooky Blacksmith Shop on Halloween.

Last year, PHA also undertook a long-needed project to upgrade and improve our computer systems. Special kudos to Susan Chandler, Harry Vann, and the Board for making this happen.

I am tremendously excited about what's coming up in 2022. Our 2022 Historic House exhibit will feature Peacham's own, world-renowned photographer Richard Brown's stunning images from his book *The Last of the Hill Farms*. We're also developing additional summer programs around the themes contained in *Hill Farms* that we're sure you will want to attend. Johanna Branson, Beatrice Ring, and Jutta Scott are currently working on a second edition of *Historic Homes of Peacham*. And that's just the beginning. Stay tuned and check our website www.peachamhistorical.org for continuing news of upcoming events.

Finally, I want give a very special thank you to each and every one of you who donated your time, talent, and financial support this past year. You know who you are, and we are most grateful.

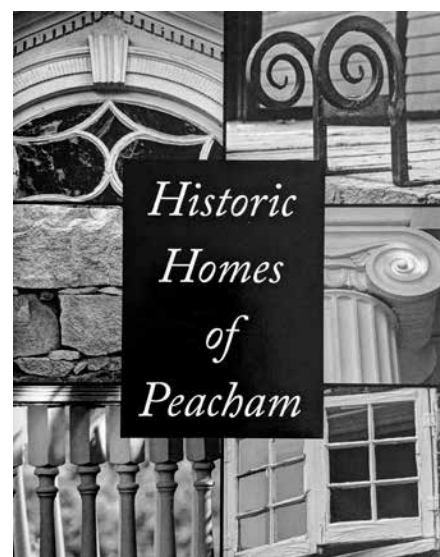
STEVE GALINAT, *PHA President*

PHA Plans New Edition of *Historic Homes of Peacham*

Since the first edition appeared in 2007, PHA's *Historic Homes of Peacham* has become the standard reference for Peacham domestic architecture, valued by old and new residents alike. Because the first edition is now sold out and there is still constant demand, a new edition is in the planning stage.

Editors Johanna Branson, Beatrice Ring, and Jutta Scott are using the new edition as an opportunity for improving the text. The first edition reproduced a contemporary image of each included home and the best available historic photograph of the structure. The editors plan to substitute better historic photographs when they have become available. They also intend to add descriptions of buildings that were inadvertently omitted 14 years ago and any new information that has come to light about the buildings that were included.

The editors are hoping you will help them! If you have information about homes that should be included (any house built before 1900 qualifies), new information about an included house, or a good photograph, historic or contemporary, please contact one of the editors. Photo credits will be included in the text. The editors hope to have the new edition available by the Annual Meeting in August so please don't delay.





Summer Exhibit to Feature Richard Brown's *The Last of the Hill Farms*

This year's summer exhibition at the Historic House will feature a collection of photographs from acclaimed Peacham photographer Richard Brown's 2018 book *The Last of the Hill Farms*, designed by Richard's wife, Susan McClellan, and published by David R. Godine. *Hill Farms* follows more than twenty other prized volumes by Brown, many of which contain iconic images of Vermont's people, farms, and gardens.

Within this large and accomplished body of work, the photographs in *Hill Farms* still stand out. In Brown's own words,

These photographs show a vanishing way of life on the small family farms that were still prevalent when I moved here in 1971. The people and landscapes in these pictures will no doubt evoke memories of a time when Peacham was still predominantly agrarian, a time when it hung in the balance between tradition and change.

Brown took most of the photographs in *Hill Farms* using an 8" x 10" view camera like those used by nineteenth-century photographers such as Matthew Brady. A view camera is heavy and awkward; it requires focusing upside down. Brown used one nonetheless because the negatives it yields are "of unsurpassed detail and tonal range."

Because of their detail and nuance, Tom Slayton, former editor of *Vermont Life*, urges that "every one of these remarkable photographs begs for close and careful looking":

What are these people telling us? Our first impression may be that the sturdy farmer with his halo of white hair must have a steady hand to sugar his coffee from a foot above the cup. It is only after a few seconds that we see the strength in his stubby hands and notice the cat looking on. Finally we can see he's a true Vermonter – on the breakfast table is an apple pie!

PHA is grateful to Richard for giving us the opportunity to show his evocative and historically important depiction of life in Peacham during the era of the family farm.

The upcoming exhibit was originally planned for Summer, 2020, the year after PHA exhibited some of Clemens Kalischer's Peacham photographs, many of which were used to show traditional village life in the 1967 Time-Life Library of America volume on New England. The Brown exhibit was postponed once because of the pandemic and yet again to accommodate a previously scheduled exhibit marking the final alumni/ae meeting of the Caledonia County Grammar School (Peacham Academy).

A series of programs highlighting themes from the photographs is in the planning stage. One of these programs will feature a conversation with Richard and Susan about the way they worked together to produce the book. Program planning has not yet been finalized. If you have an idea for a program exploring a *Hill Farms* theme, please get in touch with a member of the PHA Board.

(above) *Miller Farm*, 1971 Photograph by Richard Brown

Fifteen Years on the Frontier: The Reverend David Merrill's Life in Ohio

Much has been written about Rev. David Merrill, the second minister of the Peacham Congregational Church, but very little has been known about the fifteen years Merrill lived and preached in Ohio prior to his call to the Congregational Church ministry. Researching the history of his second wife's wedding dress for PHA's book, *Preserving Peacham's Past: 100 Years of Collecting by the Peacham Historical Association* revealed many new details about this period in Merrill's life.

David Merrill was born in Peacham in 1798. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1821 and Andover Theological Seminary in 1825. Merrill received his license to preach in 1825, began his ministry in Cohasset, MA, and joined the Massachusetts Missionary Society. During the winter of 1826-1827, the Society sent Merrill West to do missionary work as a "circuit rider"

who traveled on horseback from settlement to settlement providing ministry services. In June, 1827, Merrill arrived in the Urbana and Buck Creek, Ohio area, where he was first invited by the two communities to preach for four weeks, and then for six months. Merrill continued to serve the two fledgling churches as "stated supply" until he was finally installed as the "settled" (i.e. hired with an indefinite term) pastor in 1835.

Buck Creek and Urbana are approximately twelve miles apart, just north of Springfield, Ohio. Merrill's position required regular travel between these communities, but we have no information about where he lived. The area includes a mixture of flat land and low rolling hills. It then had a large Native American population and was still a rough, frontier region. Local records show that most of the non-Native settlers were from Virginia and Pennsylvania. Few were educated, and most settlers engaged in subsistence agriculture, although there were some fledgling industries. The area attracted

many missionary societies, especially the Baptists, Presbyterians and Methodists. But ministers often had to farm or establish their own businesses in order to support themselves, and some fought Native Americans with their own rifles.

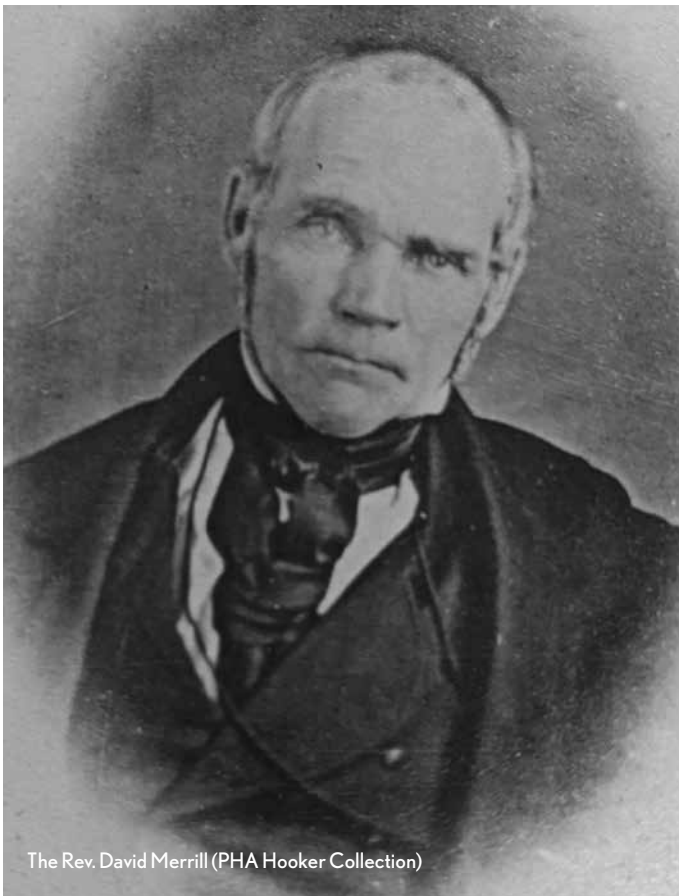
The first settled pastor of the Buck Creek and Urbana Presbyterian Churches was Rev. James Hughes, an evangelistic preacher from York, PA.

Hughes married the daughter of his teacher, Rev. Joseph "Hellfire" Smith, and he had two brothers and two sons in the ministry. Rev. Hughes also served as a missionary to Native American tribes on the Sandusky River, and he became the first president of the school that would later become Miami University. Hughes died in 1821, a few years before Merrill arrived in Ohio. However, the Hughes family maintained strong ties to the Urbana and Buck Creek churches, and it was here that David Merrill met the late Rev. Hughes's daughter Mary Amy. They married in April, 1828, one year after his arrival, when she was aged 20-21.

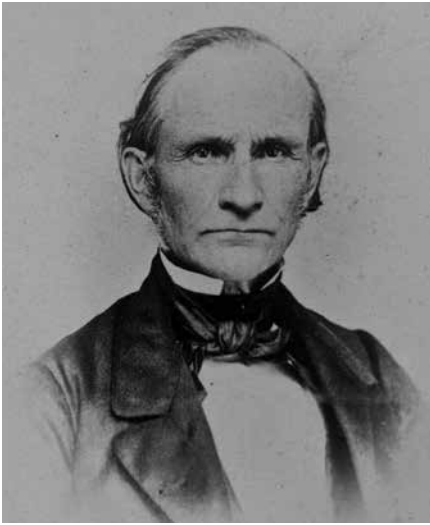
The Buck Creek church was a rough, hand-hewn log house built in 1813 for \$200. It was destroyed by fire in 1828 or early 1829, shortly after Merrill's arrival. A second church was built within the year. This church had a gallery on three sides and seats made of "two inch boards with stout pins." David's congregation first met in the newly built church in December, 1829. The Buck Creek congregation was a lively one, and its meetings included much singing.

The Urbana church did not have its own building for many years, and the congregation met in many locations, including an old log schoolhouse and a room over the jail. The congregation commissioned a meetinghouse in July, 1828. But when the structure was nearly complete, a tornado hit and the entire building was destroyed. In contrast to the Buck Creek Church, the Urbana congregation was rigidly Calvinistic and somber. Music was limited to a few Watts hymns and psalms.

Despite setbacks, Merrill's congregations continued to grow and, within a few years, he had brought in 300 new members. In 1833, the Presbyterian Church decided to separate the ministries of the Buck Creek and Urbana churches. The Reverend Asaph Boutelle was assigned to the smaller church in Buck Creek. Like Merrill, Asaph had roots in New England. He was born in 1804 in Fitchburg, MA. He graduated



The Rev. David Merrill (PHA Hooker Collection)



Rev. Asaph Boutelle (PHA Hooker Collection)

from Amherst College in 1828 and Andover Theological Seminary in 1831; he married Fidelia Eaton in 1831. Merrill was six years older than Asaph and likely became a mentor to the younger pastor even as Asaph's appointment in Buck Creek gave him more time to focus on the growing Urbana Church.

The Merrill and Boutelle families appear to have become close. When David and Mary Amy welcomed their fourth child, a girl, they named her Fidelia Boutelle, after Asaph's wife. Two years later, in 1836, Mary Amy died. David, then just 37 years old, was suddenly confronted with being the sole caregiver for four small children as well as performing the many duties of his ministry to a growing church. It must have been a comfort to have such close friends.

However, around the time of Mary Amy's death, Asaph was reassigned to missionary work and Merrill again resumed the ministry of both the Buck Creek and Urbana churches. In 1843, Asaph was installed as settled minister in Alexandria, Ohio, 65 miles away. He thereafter returned to New England and served as a minister in Lunenburg, MA.

Between 1835 and 1836, Dr. Benjamin Vanclave Hunt and his family arrived in the Urbana area. Dr. Hunt was a prominent physician who had studied at New Jersey College, Princeton University, and the University of Pennsylvania.

He was dismissed from his position at Princeton for playing cards on the Sabbath and his affiliation with a boisterous group of American Whig Party members. Hunt had twelve children born over a 21-year period. The eldest, Mary Grandin Hunt, was born in Hunterton, NJ, 1805. Her maternal grandfather was a physician, and her youngest brother also became one.

In 1818, the family moved from Lebanon, NJ, to Ohio. Dr. Hunt entered into a mercantile partnership with his wife's brother. The family moved several times before settling, in 1835, in Clark County where they built a brick house on the road between Springfield and Urbana. It is unclear how Mary Hunt met David Merrill, but it was likely through the Urbana Church. The couple married in September, 1837, when Mary was age 31.

Rev. Merrill could not have had two more dissimilar fathers-in-law. The first was a well-known country evangelistic preacher, the second a highly educated physician, businessman, and Sabbath card player. The families may have had an interesting relationship.

Following Merrill's marriage to Mary Hunt, he wrote and delivered two of his most famous and influential temperance sermons, *The Ox Sermon* and *The Mate to the Ox*. It is estimated that



Mary Hunt Merrill (PHA Hooker Collection)

between 2.5 and 3 million copies of *The Ox Sermon* were printed and nationally distributed. Merrill also served as the corresponding editor of the *Ohio Temperance Advocate*. His enthusiasm for the temperance movement was likely influenced by local conditions. As in most American frontier communities, excessive alcohol consumption was common and caused many social problems.

In 1841, the Urbana Church was split by a Presbyterian theological conflict, and Rev. Merrill was forced out. He returned to Peacham with Mary and his children, where he was ordained as minister of the Congregational Church. Rev. Merrill and Mary raised ten children in Peacham. Merrill died in July, 1850 at the age of 52.

In December, 1850, the Peacham Congregational Church put forth a unanimous call for its next minister. This call went to none other than Rev. Asaph Boutelle, David Merrill's colleague and old friend from his Ohio pastorate. The Reverend Boutelle moved to Peacham with his wife, Fidelia. He was ordained as pastor in January, 1851, and served the church until his death in 1865.

SUSAN CHANDLER

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PHA Archive (Merrill Family Biographical File)

www. Find a Grave.com, online search for Mary Amy Hughes Merrill, Champaign County, Ohio. Family genealogical information was attached to the entry.



Photography by Joek Gill

The Story of an Old Desk

One of PHA's most remarkable 2021 donations is a simple pine, slant-top desk that belonged to Benjamin Bickford (1793-1871), one of Peacham's early settlers. The desk is only 28" long and 11" high, yet it conserved a treasure trove of letters, documents, and account books from Bickford and Kinerson family members who went West. The cache was discovered in the desk some years ago by Lois White, a great-great-granddaughter of Benjamin Bickford, and Florence Randall Kinerson, the widow of Kinerson descendant James R. Kinerson. The two women spent about two years sorting and arranging the heap of correspondence and other documents stored in the desk. In August, 2009, they donated the Bickford/Kinerson Family Collection to PHA.

The desk that contained the documents, also donated by Lois White, is a unique artifact that helps to tell the story of two Peacham families who settled on Penny Street in the 1820's and are

linked through the 1847 marriage of the oldest Bickford daughter, Emily, to her neighbor James Richardson Kinerson. The life histories of Emily and her siblings illustrate the complexity of decision making about whether to stay in Peacham or emigrate. The Bickford parents, Benjamin and Bridget (Keys) Bickford, had struggled to manage the family farm. Emily and her oldest brother, Albert, stayed in Peacham, but four of the siblings and Emily's son left and settled in the Midwest. The second Bickford son, Russell, left Peacham in 1847. His siblings Harvey and Caroline went West in 1856. The youngest sibling, Charles, joined them in 1864 after his service in the Union Army. All of the departed siblings kept in touch with their Peacham family. Benjamin and, later, Emily stored their letters in Benjamin's slant-top desk.

The vintage desk is made from old-growth white pine and features hand-cut screws, cut nails, and hand-forged hinges. All suggest that the desk was made before 1812. The wood was

treated with linseed oil which has darkened over time, and there are traces of paint. The maker of the desk is unknown, but the hand-cut dovetails of both the desk itself and two small, interior drawers are uneven and poorly fitted, suggesting that the desk was not made by an experienced cabinet maker.

The desk and its cache of family letters and documents are significant additions to PHA's collections. Some materials from the desk are reproduced and described in PHA's new publication, *Preserving Peacham's Past: 100 Years of Collecting by the Peacham Historical Association*. These include Emily Bickford Kinerson's diaries (1891-99), James Kinerson's account books, and the Penny Street Schoolhouse ledger.

JUTTA SCOTT



Lois White with the desk of her great-great-grandfather Benjamin Bickford.

Photograph by Susan Chandler

Maple Sugaring

The following is an excerpt from *Preserving Peacham's Past: 100 Years of Collecting by the Peacham Historical Association*

Maple sugaring has a very long history in Vermont. Indigenous people shared with European settlers their practice of tapping trees to gather sap. The first permanent settlers in Peacham—Jonathan Elkins and his son—started farming in the early spring of 1776 by making maple sugar. In the form of crystalized sugar, it was an important source of food for local people. With the rise of affordable cane sugar from the slave plantations of the West Indies and southern United States, maple production in Vermont gradually shifted to syrup, becoming a prized commodity later in the 19th century.

Maple sap is gathered as it rises in the trees in early spring when temperatures are well above 32 degrees during daytime but still sink back below freezing each night. This window of time worked well for farmers, coinciding with a break between their work in the winter woodlot and spring planting. Until the advent of plastic tubing, farmers bored a small hole in the trunk of each tree, inserted a spout, and the rising sap flowed out into buckets hung below. The sap was collected and heated, reducing its volume and intensifying its sweetness and flavor. In early years, this was done in large pots over open fires; eventually the work was done in sugarhouses, where a firebox heated shallow pans holding simmering, constantly circulating sap and reducing it to syrup. Until the 1870's, the syrup was commonly reduced to solid, crystallized sugar, which was

more condensed and easier to transport than syrup.

On a good day, one tap yields one gallon of sap. It takes 40 gallons of sap to produce one gallon of syrup or 8 pounds of sugar.

We display tools used for gathering maple sap in the late 19th century. Spiles (also called spouts) evolved during this period from hand carved wood to patented cast metal ones. The full buckets could be carried in pairs over the farmer's shoulders in yokes—certainly not easy to do on slopes still deep in snow. The buckets were usually emptied into barrels on wagons pulled by oxen or horses through the woods and then on to the sugarhouse.

JOHANNA BRANSON

(below) Maple Sugaring Tools
2 wooden spiles, handmade
3 cast metal spouts
Used by Charles Stewart, donated by Ken Churchill

(bottom) Wooden Human Yoke with Leather Straps and Bucket Hooks
Donated by Beppy Brown, 2018
Origin unknown

Handmade Sap Bucket
Donated by Eloise Miller, 1997

Sap Bucket Cover
Donated by Ed Schneider, 2005



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