

THE PEACHAM PATRIOT

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PEACHAM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Changing Times: Peacham's Transformation Between World War I and World War II

This year's summer exhibit, *Changing Times: Peacham's Transformation Between World War I and World War II*, was inspired by Frank Miller's serendipitous discovery of an article, *Peacham, Vermont Fifty Years of Economic and Social Change 1929-1979*, co-authored by Lorna Quimby and Shepard Clough¹. As Frank read the article, he realized that it offered an excellent theme for a summer exhibit. He and Susan Chandler went to work, and the exhibit will open, as usual, on July 4.

The interwar period was a time of dramatic technological and cultural change coupled with enormous economic hardship. It was an exciting time and a frightening one. Throughout this tumultuous period, dairy farming remained the "key element in Peacham."

At the end of the 1920's farm holdings remained small (on the average 180 acres); the amount of tillage per farm amounted to about 50 acres; and the average number of cows per farm producing a cash income was 25. Methods of field husbandry would have been familiar to farmers of fifty years before.²

But electrification, refrigeration, and motorized vehicles began to change farming dramatically. Shortly after the Great War ended, Peacham farmers began to turn to gasoline-powered vehicles to take their milk to the creamery. During the same period, electrical lighting replaced kerosene lamps and gas systems while electrical refrigeration freed farmers from the time-consuming task of cutting ice and storing it for use over the year.



Moore family and friends, 1930s.

These technological changes affected daily life as well as dairy farming. Roads were improved, labor-saving devices made housework easier, and the new telephone service made communication much faster. But these things cost money and made Peacham's farmers much more dependent on cash:

The introduction of the automobile and the truck, the improvements to roads, the shift from making butter on the farm to shipping milk to metropolitan areas, the improvement of herds, the mechanization of field husbandry, and the introduction of electricity all required large investments. The greater the investments which a farmer made and the greater the proportion of his milk which was in distant and impersonal markets, the more he became dependent upon purchases to satisfy his needs and wants. Peacham farmers lost much of whatever was left of self-sufficiency and increasingly relied on the market for money to acquire supplies and food and to pay for acquisitions.³

Farmers' increased need for cash coincided with a long and persistent decline in the ratio of farm to consumer prices:

Taking the relationship of agricultural prices to industrial prices in the 1910-1914 period as "parity," the parity ratio worked to the disadvantage of farmers in the brief depression of 1920• 1921 and remained against them during the entire decade. . . . By [1932] . . . farmers were forty-five percent worse off in this relationship than they had been in the 1910-1914 period. . . . The effect of this collapse of prices was increased because the drop came at a time when the milk industry was in the throes of the revolution which required high capital investments to increase efficiency in production and to replace the vanishing labor force with machinery.⁴

The labor force was vanishing because wages for farm labor were so low that a man could no longer save money to buy

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LORNA FIELDS QUIMBY
July 30, 1928-April 14, 2025

PHA joins the family and friends of Lorna in mourning her passing. Lorna, the fourth of Ben and Helen Field's five daughters, was raised on the family farm in Peacham's "South Part," a farm she brought to life vividly both in her columns for the *Danville North Star* and in her memoir *Growing Up Rural*, published in 2020.

A lifelong resident of Peacham, Lorna served the community in varied capacities. She was a choir member and treasurer of the Congregational Church, a school board director, assistant town clerk, and town clerk.

Lorna's contributions to PHA were virtually endless. Lorna served as an outstanding archivist/curator for over thirty years until 2014 and also served as PHA president from 1994 until 2004. Before she became president, Lorna played a major role in organizing and cataloguing donations to PHA. She was the author or editor of several PHA books and a frequent contributor to the *Patriot*. In sum, today's PHA would not have been possible without Lorna's many contributions.

A future issue of the *Patriot* will feature some of Lorna's many articles to honor her contributions and memory.

Changing Times continued from pg. 1.

his own farm. "This shift not only aided the decline of the number of dairy farms in Peacham, but also led to a change in all kinds of living patterns."⁵ The shift also affected the town's tax rolls:

The surplus of 1929 became by 1939 a deficit of \$9,641.43, when 55 delinquent taxpayers owed a total of \$2,314.86 and 11 individuals lived at the expense of the town. During the period from 1929 to 1939, the total appraised value of property in the town, the Grand List, declined slightly from \$576,778.00 to \$563,170.00. The hard times worked their decay on Peacham farm property. When a barn burned, the unfortunate owner seldom rebuilt.⁶

Instead, some farmers gave up farming and moved on. It was during this period that academics from Boston and New York City began to buy summer homes in Peacham. The car made it possible to get to Peacham quite easily, and prices were unbeatable.



Dick Quimby
early 1940s.



Hillcrest Lodge 1920s.

One farm in Peacham, for example, with 125 acres, a house of 14 rooms, with inside plumbing and running water and a barn which could tie up 25 cows was sold for \$1,800 in 1937. This bargain was not exceptional. Crowding the market in 1939 were three places which had been foreclosed and four others for sale by administrators of estates who wanted to move their properties to satisfy the claims of inheritors.⁷

By the beginning of World War II, dairy farming "had declined and was continuing to decline" while "newcomers, especially from the academic profession, had bought up many places for part-time occupancy." Peacham "had become much less homogeneous in its interests than at the beginning of the Great Depression and was being subjected to a whole set of factors inducing change."⁸

To learn more about this fascinating period in Peacham's history, you'll want to visit the exhibit.

STEVE GALINAT

1. Clough, Shepard B. & Quimby, Lorna, *Peacham, Vermont: Fifty 1 Years of Economic and Social Change 1929-1979*, 51 *Vermont History* 5 (1983).
2. Id. at 6.
3. Id. at 11.
4. Id. at 11-12.
5. Id. at 15.
6. Id.
7. Id. at 17.
8. Id. at 19.



East Peacham Store 1918.



Maypole 1930s.



Clifton Chandler 1930s.

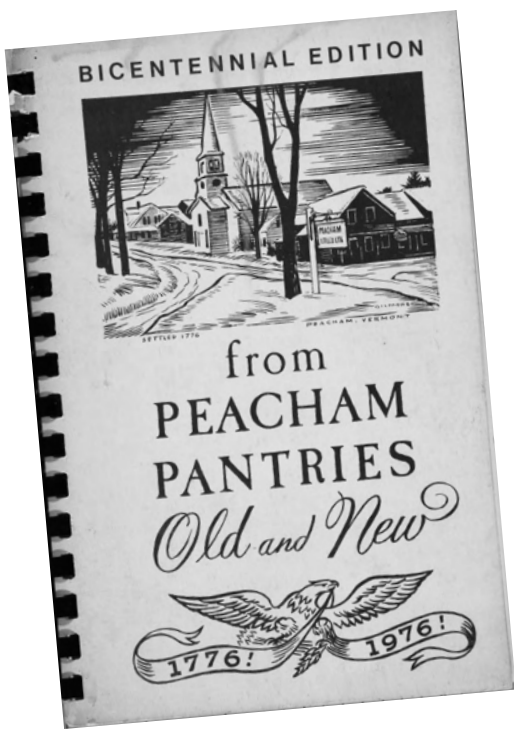
PRESIDENT'S LETTER

This April we lost one of PHA's most influential leaders, Lorna Field Quimby. Lorna shared so much Peacham history with us through her many roles at PHA, her articles in the *North Star*, her memoir *Growing Up Rural*, and her contributions to the Vermont Historical Society. As a relative newcomer to Peacham, rarely does a day pass without some reminder of Lorna. She prepped me for ghost walks, wrote for the *Patriot*, and built PHA's archive item by item. I will miss her quick wit and helpfulness, and I am grateful for the trail of facts, figures, and humor she left behind for us in the ARC. Without Lorna's contributions, I am not sure we (PHA) would be able to do the things we do.

This year's summer exhibit, inspired by an article Lorna wrote with historian Shepard Clough, will be dedicated to Lorna's memory. The exhibit will focus on the interwar period, years that Lorna witnessed and which brought remarkable change—technological, economic, social, cultural—to Peacham and the nation. The automobile allowed Peachamites to travel and work outside of town. The telephone changed the way Peachamites shared news and how emergencies were announced. Electricity, which gradually reached even the more remote parts of Peacham, changed household work while the new radio programs changed how people spent their evenings and got their news. Wartime military service, increased travel, and a new flock of summer residents brought fresh perspectives and ideas to Peacham. The interwar period also saw the introduction of many prepared foods, including mass-produced candy like Tootie Rolls, M&M's, Hershey's kisses, and my own favorite, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. The exhibit, organized by Susan Chandler and Frank Miller, explores the impact of this important period on Peacham in detail. You won't want to miss it, and PHA thanks Susan and Frank for their work in making it happen.

Since November, 2024, we have been brainstorming ideas to celebrate the nation's—and Peacham's 250th—birthday. Please contact a PHA member if you have ideas or if you'd like to volunteer.

STEVE GALINAT, *PHA President*



Peacham Cooks: A Tale of Two Doughnuts

Until very recently, visitors to the Historical House on Fall Foliage Day could look forward to a tray of delicious, warm doughnuts donated by Marilyn Petrie. Marilyn rose in the middle of the night on those fall mornings to have them ready and fresh for PHA volunteers to pick up. Those in the know were sure to visit early because the doughnuts were always gone by noon.

There are two kinds of doughnuts recorded in Peacham's community cookbooks and family recipe boxes, distinguished by their leavening. Marilyn's doughnuts were "cake" doughnuts, by far the most popular type made in this region. (They are, in fact, called "New England Doughnuts" in general books about American cooking.) "Raised" doughnut recipes are included in PHA's collection of community cookbooks, but with far less frequency.

Doughnuts were so popular that Peacham's community cookbooks sometimes had special sections devoted to them. *From Peacham Pantries*, published by a Peacham Academy committee in the 1940s, provides 12 doughnut recipes, 11 cake and one raised. All

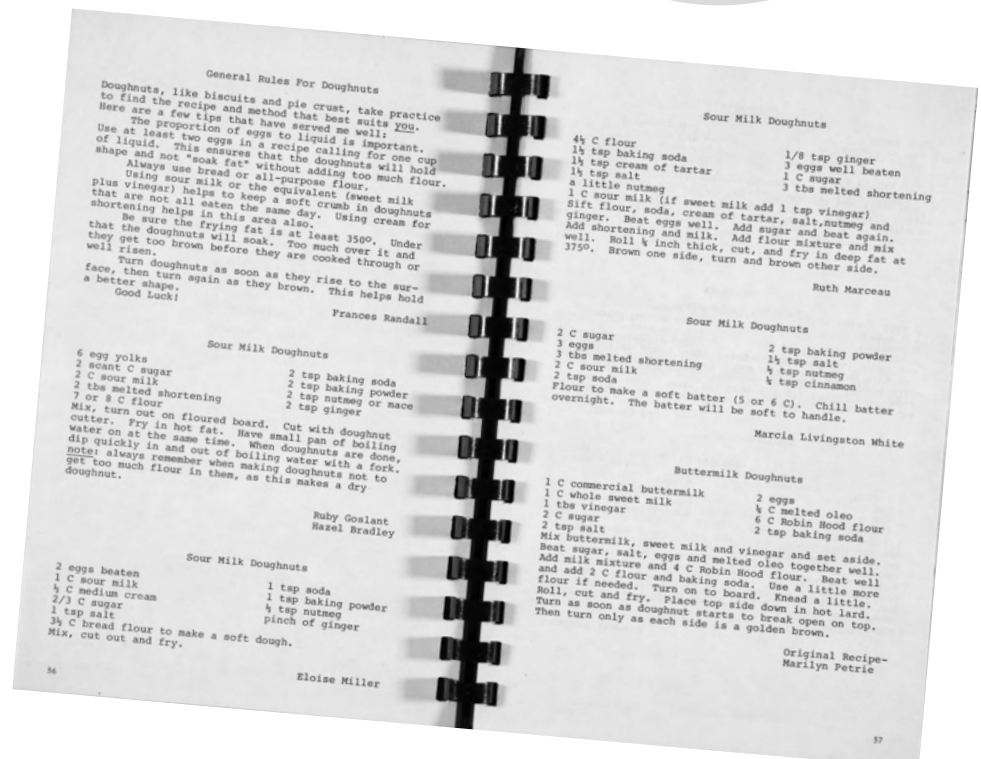
include flour, sugar, shortening, eggs, milk, and leavening. As was the custom at the time, the recipes list ingredients but provide almost no instructions for making the doughnuts, frying them, or the type of fat to use for frying. It was assumed readers already knew these basics.

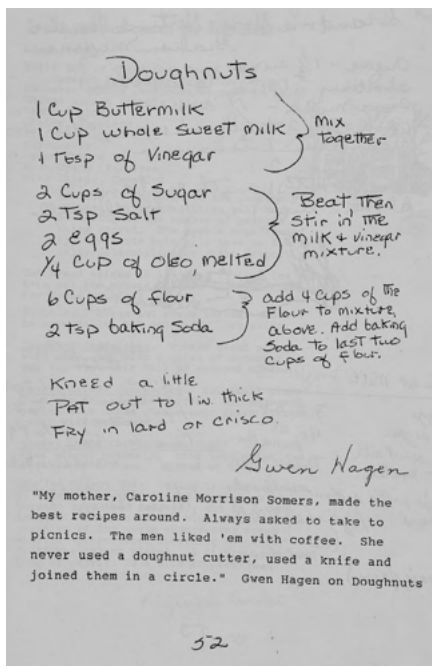
Raised doughnuts rely on yeast for leavening; cake doughnuts rely on baking soda or baking powder. Both of these chemical leavening agents were invented during the mid-nineteenth century. Peacham's early settlers thus could only make raised doughnuts – and they had to make their own yeast. Recipes for making yeasts and dough "starters" are found in the earliest materials in the PHA archives. Packaged yeast was not invented until 1868, and dry yeast became available only after World War II. The oldest cake doughnut recipes in the PHA archives use baking soda ("saleratus") with sour milk or a bit of vinegar to produce the bubbles that lighten the batter, offering the possibility of producing doughnuts without waiting for them to rise. Baking powder (baking soda combined with inert acids, usually cream of tartar or acid phosphate) came along soon after and simplified matters even more by avoiding the need to include the right amount of acid. Lots of recipes record the transition to these

new ingredients, with some including sour milk AND vinegar AND baking soda AND baking powder for good measure.

The greater popularity of cake doughnuts likely resulted from the speed and consistency offered by chemical leavening agents. Yeast doughs can take many hours to rise and they do so less predictably, particularly in northern climates.

Marilyn published her doughnut recipe in *From Peacham Pantries: Old and New, Bicentennial Edition 1776-1976* (a much-expanded version of the 1940s cookbook) produced by the Peacham Church Fellowship. Frank Randall compiled the doughnut section and





added helpful “General Rules for Doughnuts” at the beginning. Marilyn’s recipe, titled Buttermilk Doughnuts, is one of 13 (and there is still only one for raised doughnuts). She includes instructions for making them as well as the ingredients, and she states that it is an original recipe.

By “original recipe” Marilyn likely meant that the recipe had been handed down in her family. *A Recipe Tour of Historic Peacham*, published by the Friends of the Peacham Library in 1999, contains the same recipe, submitted by Marilyn’s mother, Gwen Hagen. Gwen noted that

My mother, Caroline Morrison Somers, made the best recipes around. Always asked to take to picnics. The men liked 'em with coffee. She never used a doughnut cutter, used a knife, and joined them in a circle.

Eloise Miller also submitted her cake doughnut recipe to Peacham cookbooks. Her son, Frank Miller, reports that there was always a large jar of them at home, and a doughnut with a cup of coffee was standard fare. Frank says that Eloise also made raised doughnuts, but only once a year during sugaring season when they were served with sugar on snow, accompanied by a sour pickle and black coffee. We could not find this recipe in any community

cookbook. Eloise credited Mildred Farrington as the recipe’s source so perhaps did not think it was hers to publish. But Eloise’s family has shared it with us. Both Marilyn’s and Eloise’s recipes are below. Try them to discover whether you prefer cake or raised.



Buttermilk Doughnuts Original Recipe

Marilyn Petrie

- 1 C commercial buttermilk
- 1 C whole sweet milk
- 1 tbs vinegar
- 2 C sugar
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup melted oleo (crossed out and butter written in)
- 7 C Robin Hood flour
- 2 tsp baking soda

Mix buttermilk, sweet milk and vinegar and set aside. Beat sugar, salt, eggs and melted butter together well. Add milk mixture and 4 C Robin Hood flour. Beat well and add 2 C flour and baking soda. Use a little more flour if needed. Turn onto board. Knead a little. Roll, cut and fry. Place top side down in hot lard. Turn as soon as doughnut starts to break open on top. Then turn only as each side is a golden brown. Note: All-purpose flour may be substituted for Robin Hood flour.



Raised Doughnuts

Eloise Miller

- 1 pint milk (scalded)
- 1/2 C butter and lard
- 1/2 C sugar (more or less)
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 t salt
- 1 yeast cake
- 1/4 t soda
- 6-7 C flour

When raised, take out on board. Cut out. Do not knead: raise again. Fat must not be too hot or doughnuts will not raise.

THE VERMONT COOK

Included in the bicentennial *From Peacham Pantries*

By Lorna Quimby

She was very frugal and thrifty
Yet she always cooked with cream
Thick sour milk, and sweet country
Butter. Nowadays it would seem
Rank extravagance, but she was only
Using what she had,
“Making do” the saying has it. She
Would have thought it mad
To buy what she could make so she
Made crusty loaves of bread;
Cookies fragrant with vanilla or spicy
With ginger instead;
Her doughnuts were her secret pride—she
Made the best in the County;
Her pies were flaky and tender, filled with
Nature’s Bounty;
Her cakes were a little heavy (have you
Ever cooked with wood?).
When you asked her for her recipe,
She’d give it if she could,
“A pinch of this, a dash of that, and,
By the way, last batch she’d had
The best luck yet, though it made her sad,
She didn’t know what did it.



Prohibition: A Look Back Peacham's Long Dry Spell

During Peacham's earliest years, drinking alcoholic beverages was seen as a social problem only when it led to the disgrace of getting drunk. Most Peachamites drank alcohol every day. They did so, in part, to reduce the risk of illness from contaminated well or spring water. Moderate daily use of apple cider, brandy, rum, whisky, weak beer, and wine was also considered "indispensable to good digestion, and as necessary to good health, as bread."¹ During this period, doctors often prescribed alcohol to treat pain and conditions ranging from colic to cholera. "Bitters" composed of herbs, barks, roots, seeds, peels, berries, and fruits mixed with cider, sugar, and sometimes water, were regarded as a disease preventative much as vitamin pills are today. Social gatherings — weddings, funerals, house and barn-raising, militia training, shopping, stopping by one of Peacham's four taverns for news and socializing — offered additional opportunities for imbibing.

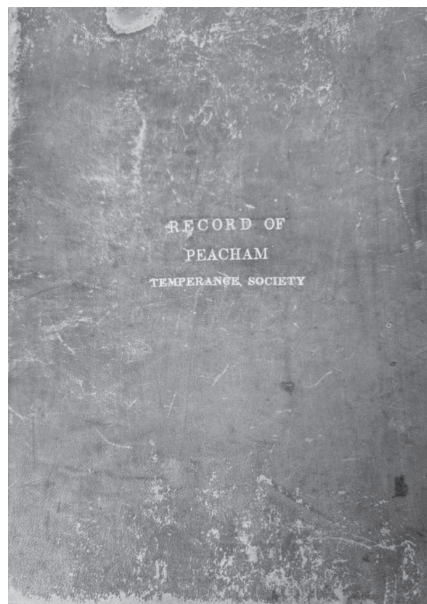
With all these uses, alcohol was abundant throughout post-Revolutionary Vermont. A contemporary observer in Barnet estimated that "20 to 30 barrels of cider was necessary to carry a family through the winter—and some became very hard."² In 1810, the U.S. Census showed 125 distilleries in Vermont, and some turned out as much as 50 gallons per day.³ Peacham was no exception to Vermont's enthusiasm for distilling. In 1811, the Bennington Reporter, in an article about a fire in Peacham, noted that "It may not be improper to observe that, 27 stills yet remain in operation in the single town of Peacham."⁴

Distilling was extremely profitable. Spirits, typically made from potatoes, commanded 50 to 75 cents (\$13-\$18.75 in \$2025) per gallon, offering an excellent return on the small investment necessary for a still. Many of Peacham's leading citizens were involved in distilling businesses. General William Chamberlain, for example, not only had such a business but patented a new type of still.⁵

Given the high level of economic and social activity centered on alcohol, it is unsurprising that the temperance movement did not reach Peacham until about twenty years after its first American appearance. But in 1828, Peacham residents voted to approve the proposition of the Merchants of Caledonia County: "that we do advise the merchants of this town not to sell ardent spirits, except in cases of sickness, and we will use our influence to countenance and sustain them in such a course."⁶

In 1830, a Caledonia County Temperance Society organizational meeting was held in Peacham. Three of Peacham's leading citizens (Col. Jonathan Elkins, Jesse Merrill, Esq., Dr. Josiah Shedd) headed the new organization, which advocated total abstinence except for medicinal purposes to "effect the destruction of the monster, intemperance."⁷ Seventy-two men signed the Society's constitution.⁸

Enthusiasm for the new temperance movement built rapidly. By 1834, only one licensed public house remained in town, and that single tavern-keeper's license was not renewed in 1835.⁹ The temperance movement claimed to have diminished the number of poorhouse tenants, and poorhouse farms subsequently ran into debt. Other professed outcomes included fewer injuries, less domestic abuse, and fewer illegalities requiring attorneys.¹⁰



A Peacham Temperance Society was formed in 1842, and this group continued its work for more than forty years. Its members pledged not to use or provide alcoholic beverages and to discourage its use throughout the community. During the same period, a "Cold Water Army" was organized to attract young people. The group held annual meetings to solicit abstinence pledges "till the number of names on the pledge was over 1000 and Peacham was called the "Banner town" for temperance in the state."¹¹ In 1859 alone, 800 Peachamites signed a pledge upholding temperance principles.¹²

Peachamites also actively sought a statewide ban on alcohol sales. In 1837, Peacham voters signed a petition presented to the General Assembly of the State of Vermont requesting that the state "repeal the present statutes with regard to licenses and pass laws wholly interdicting the traffic in ardent spirits." After a series of indecisive referendums, the legislature did adopt a prohibition law in 1852 which remained on the books until 1903, when a "local option" rule went into effect.¹³

Peacham continued to ban the sale of alcohol after local option went into effect in 1903, and it reaffirmed this commitment after the 20th Amendment ended the national experiment with prohibition in 1933. Peacham remained dry until 1966, when voters finally agreed, 66 to 44, to permit the sale of beer within Peacham's borders. In 1969, the voters decided (64 to 32) to allow the sale of wine, but the ban on sale of distilled alcohol continued until 1985 when John Farrell, the proprietor of the Peacham Inn, petitioned to end it.¹⁴ At a specially warned meeting, on June 17, 1985, by a vote of 100 to 60, Peacham voters approved the petition. After 150 years as a dry town, Peacham was fully "wet."

While professed enthusiasm for prohibition suggests that Peachamites were typically teetotalers for at least a century, the reality may have been somewhat different. The evidence suggests that many Vermonters evaded the 1852 law. One way they did so was a loophole which permitted a town "agent" to sell

alcohol for “mechanical, chemical, and medicinal” purposes. This narrow exception seems to have been interpreted quite broadly; in 1878, Peacham’s agent reported that he had sold 92¾ gallons of liquor, 52 to Peacham’s approximately 1000 residents (many of whom were children).¹⁵ And, just as non-residents bought from Peacham’s town agent, residents could buy out of town and or out of state. Even after national prohibition went into effect, Barnet and Greensboro became known routes for Canadian alcohol transport. In a nutshell, while we know that Peacham long favored alcohol prohibition, we don’t know how much alcohol was consumed or what proportion of Peacham’s declining population continued to enjoy drinking it.

KATHLEEN MONROE

1. Wells, Frederic P., *History of Barnet, Vermont, from the outbreak of the French and Indian war to present time* (St. Johnsbury, VT, 1923).

2. Wells, at 192 quoted in Bogart, Ernest L., *Peacham: History of a Vermont Hill Town* 209 (Montpelier, VT: Vermont Historical Society, 1948).

3. Hemenway, Abby M. (Ed.), *III The Vermont Historical Gazetteer: A Magazine Embracing a History of Each Town, Civil, Ecclesiastical, Biographical, and Military* 702, quoted in Bogart, at 209.

4. Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, *A Nation of Drinkers*, <https://4 www.lcmm.org/prohibition/new-nation-of-drinkers/>

5. Bogart, at 210.

6. Bogart, at 213.

7. *Farmer’s Herald*, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, July 28, 1830.

8. *The Vermont Watchman*, Montpelier, Vermont, July 27, 1830

9. *Vermont Patriot*, Montpelier, Vermont, May 12, 1834

10. Id.

11. *Anniversary Exercises of the Congregational Church, Peacham, Vermont*, April 14, 1894, at 57, quoted in Bogart, at 215.

12. *Middlebury Register and Addison County Journal*, Middlebury, Vermont, April 13, 1859.

13. See Bogart, at 215-16.

14. See Monroe, Kathleen, *The Peacham Inn, The Peacham Patriot*, Winter, 2025.

15. *The Saint Johnsbury Caledonian*, St. Johnsbury, Vermont, January 25, 1878. The population of Peacham in 1880 was 1041. See U.S. Census, Bulletin 51: Number of Inhabitants: Vermont tbl. 6, /<https://www2.census.gov/1890/bulletins/demographics/51-population-of-vt.pdf>. Likely about 40% were under age 16 See Bogart, at 224.

Celebrating the Nation’s 250th Anniversary

In 2026, the nation will celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The Semiquincentennial, as it is formally known, will be a landmark celebration of the country’s historical events in 1776. Cities and towns nationwide are preparing to mark the 250th anniversary with parades, historical reenactments, exhibitions, and educational programs.

Vermont Governor Phil Scott created the Vermont 250th Anniversary Commission to plan, encourage, develop, coordinate, and promote observances and activities commemorating the historic events associated with the 250th anniversary as well as the 1775–1783 Revolutionary War. The Commission hopes to engage all of Vermont’s 252 cities and towns in commemorative activities over the next few years, and it has asked cities and towns to adopt an anniversary resolution establishing a local committee to undertake and coordinate such activities. The Commission will provide these committees with notifications of funding opportunities, tips for preparing events, educational materials, and advice on marketing and civic engagement. It will also post community events, programs, and projects it endorses on its website calendar and social media.

Many local towns, including Barnet, Danville, and Cabot, have already adopted the resolution. PHA asked the Peacham Selectboard to do so, which it did at its May 7 meeting. The PHA Board also unanimously approved the creation of a coordinating committee, which will invite community members to participate in planning anniversary events, exhibits, and special activities.

For Peacham, the 250th anniversary offers a unique opportunity to revisit two pivotal events in the town’s history, both of which took place in 1776. One event was Peacham’s settlement. In July 1776, Jonathan Elkins and his family moved into a log house and became the first settlers to live in Peacham year-round. During the same year, he was joined by Frye Bailey, who built the first house in town, and the Skeel (John and Phebe Webster Skeel) and McLaughlin (Archibald and Christina McKinley) families. The McLaughlins emigrated in 1775 from Scotland with their two sons.

The other notable event in 1776 was the construction of the Bayley-Hazen Military Road. Colonel Jacob Bayley, head of the frontier militia during the Revolutionary War, proposed building a road from Newbury, on the Connecticut River, to Canada to facilitate sending troops and supplies to the American army in Canada. The proposal was approved by General Washington, and enabling legislation was passed by the Continental Congress on May 10, 1776. By July, wagons could go as far as Peacham, but the road was never finished because of concerns that the British army would use it as an invasion route.

The PHA Anniversary Committee will be starting its work soon. **If you are interested in volunteering to serve on the Committee or have ideas for the celebration, please email peachamhistorical@gmail.com or get in touch with a Board member.**

JUTTA R. SCOTT

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Peacham Academy students, 1939.

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