

THE PEACHAM PATRIOT

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PEACHAM HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION



Photo by Jock Gill.

PHA Summer Programming Focuses on Textiles

This year's summer exhibit and programming utilizes PHA's extensive collection of local clothing and fabrics to explore both textile crafts and a deep socioeconomic divide between rich and poor Peachamites that developed during the 19th century. *Rags and Riches: Poverty and Wealth in 19th Century Peacham*, opened at the Historical House on July 4 (12–4 p.m.) and will continue on successive Sundays (1–4 p.m.) until Labor Day. The exhibit portrays the wealth gap among Peachamites through the clothing they wore and the housewares they used. This wealth gap widened dramatically from the beginning to the middle of the 19th century, leaving some Peachamites with nothing but rustic homespun and others with elegant formal wear and even ball gowns. Susan Chandler, assisted by Steve Galinat, Sarah Lydon, and Frank Miller, curated the exhibit. Susan McClellan created the graphic and exhibit design; Jock Gill contributed photography; Dave Stauffer contributed a beautiful paint job, creating a wonderfully bright, light exhibit space.

This year's summer programming is unusually rich, and it offers an opportunity to explore textiles both from an historical and craft perspective. Some events will be "hands on" and give participants the chance to learn new skills. Others will explain and showcase the sewing and textile skills that were once common and are now rare. One series of programs, at the Peacham Library, was organized in collaboration with the Library and curated by Librarian Susan Smolinsky. Exhibit-related events will also take place at the Historical House, culminating in a "Tea and Textiles" event at which Susan Chandler will both

serve tea and identify textiles brought by participants.

PHA's Annual Meeting will continue to explore the textile theme. Featured speaker Michele Pagán, a textile conservator and recently returned Vermonter, will talk about "19th Century Fabrics and the Vermont Sampler Initiative." Pagan, a graduate of the University of Vermont and the University of Connecticut, credits a youthful visit to the Bennington Museum for her career in textiles. The Museum recently published her research paper, *Geography and Technological Change in Vermont: The Transition from Homespun Flax to Machine-Made Cotton Textiles*. Over her forty years of textile conservation, Pagán has worked with a variety of museums and historic sites, including the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Smithsonian Museums of American History and African-American History, Mount Vernon, Monticello, and the State of Vermont. Pagan currently works out of her East Dorset Studio. She likes to say that she is "saving history one piece of fabric at a time."

Please check the events calendar on page 2 for more information about these programs. You will not want to miss this series.



Photo by Jock Gill.

PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

Summer greetings!

Everyone at PHA is excited about this year's exhibit, *Rags and Riches: Poverty and Wealth in 19th Century Peacham*. Please stop by the Historical House (Sundays, 1-4 pm through Labor Day) to see, through selected items from PHA's superb collection of clothing and housewares, the stark differences in wealth and living standards that developed among Peachamites during the nineteenth century. Several events (1-4 p.m.) associated with the exhibit are planned. Please check the events calendar.

You will also want to put the PHA Annual Meeting, August 9 at 6 p.m., on your calendar. This year's speaker is Michele Pagan, a textile conservator, who will talk about "19th Century Fabrics and the Vermont Sampler Initiative."

Please check our website www.peachamhistorical.org for additional PHA activities this summer.

PHA's success depends on the many members who volunteer their time. This year, as usual, there are many members to thank. We are particularly grateful to Dave Stauffer for painting the Historical House exhibit room; Susan McClellan for exhibit and graphic design; Susan Chandler, Sarah Lydon, and Frank Miller for planning the exhibit; Bruce and Margaret Maclean for hosting this year's Wine and Cheese Party; and Johanna Branson, Beatrice Ring, and Jutta Scott, who have devoted many hours to producing the second edition of *Historic Homes of Peacham*, forthcoming this fall. I'm sure I have forgotten others who should be thanked. We are grateful to all of you who volunteer your time and creativity to PHA.

We are looking forward to seeing you soon!

STEVE GALINAT, PHA President

Events Calendar

Events marked PL will take place at the Peacham Library; events marked HH will take place at the Historical House.

Monday, July 10, 6:30 p.m. (PL)

"Fiber Arts in Peacham", Artist Reception for Gilmore Gallery Exhibit (following the Library Annual Meeting)

Thursday, July 13, 7:00 p.m. (PL)

"Vermont Fibershed", Jane Woodhouse

Sunday, July 16, 1-4 p.m. (HH)

"Exploring 19th Century Games", Steve Galinat

Tuesday, July 18, 7 p.m. (PL) "

Industrial Hemp", Travis Samuels of ZION Growers

Saturday, July 22, 1-4 p.m. (PL)

"Stitched Shibori with Indigo Workshop", Jane Woodhouse

Thursday, July 27, 7 p.m. (PL)

"Weaving Before the Revival", Justin Squizzero of the Burroughs Garret

Sunday, July 30, 1-4 p.m. (HH)

"Working with Wools Demonstration, Kathy Galinat & Marilyn Magnus

Thursday, August 3, 7 p.m. (PL)

"Mending-Creative and Practical", Michelle Fay of Chrysalis Creative

Wednesday, August 9, 6 p.m. (PL)

PHA Annual Meeting, "19th Century Fabrics and the Vermont Sampler Initiative", Michele Pagan

Sunday, August 20, 1-4 p.m. (HH)

"Tea and Textiles" Susan Chandler will conduct an informal tea at which she will identify heirloom textiles. Registration for this event is limited, and you must register by email (Peachamhistorical@gmail.com) by August 10. Suggested donation \$10.00.

Sunday, August 27, 4-6 p.m.

PHA Annual Wine and Cheese Party at the home of Bruce and Margaret Maclean



Photo by Joek Gill.

The History of "The Pondsides"

Editor's Note: [Last winter, PHA discovered a picture postcard showing a waterside ice cream stand. The card identified the location as Peacham, but no one on the PHA Board or whom Board members asked could identify the site. Jock Gill posted the image on Front Porch Forum with a request for identifying information. Kathleen Monroe, of Barnet, not only identified the site but agreed to write up its history, below. PHA thanks Kathleen for shedding light on this interesting piece of Peacham history.]

The Pondsides, a picnic and camping ground with a bungalow for rent, was located in Ewell's Hollow on Ewell Pond. The business was operated by William Sherman Sanborn and his wife, Harriet ("Hattie") Ewell Sanborn, who maintained a "cottage" on the pond. The Sanborns launched the Pondsides venture in 1913 and operated it seasonally until 1939. The little bungalow at Pondsides was then moved to Keiser Pond by John C. McGill, chief of the St. Johnsbury Fire Department, who used it as a camp. I could find no further mention of Pondsides or the bungalow after that date.

Mrs. Sanborn almost certainly inherited the Pondsides property from her father, Horace Ewell. Horace's father was Isaac Ewell, for whom Ewell Pond is named. Isaac operated a grist mill on the pond as early as 1820, the first year Peacham started taxing mills on the grand list. Isaac and Thing Ladd, who operated a sawmill, are believed to have built a dam, with a gauge to control flow, at Ewells Pond in 1819. The pond was then called Mud Pond. According to Bogart's *Peacham: The Story of a Vermont Hill Town*, Isaac was reputed to have the ability to get more flour from a bushel of wheat than any other miller of his day. He was also said to be a man of strong opinions. In a Nov. 17, 1845, he wrote a letter to Hazen Merrill asking him to patronize his mill "irrespective of theological differences."

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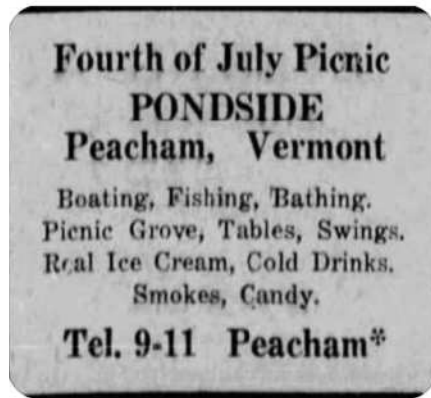


Pondside was one of many Vermont waterfront properties that, from around 1870, were developed as religious revival and/or recreational campgrounds. West Barnet's Lakeside Hotel, which opened in 1880, was likely the first in the Peacham area. Only a handful of these properties, notably the Lake Morey Resort, have survived. But, in their hey-day, they attracted large crowds.

In 1913, Farmer's Picnic Day, sponsored by the North Peacham Social Club, attracted as many as 200 people to Pondside. Pondside offered these guests the chance to buy candy, lemonade, popcorn, and "ice cream with wafers" (an early ice cream sandwich) from flower-decorated booths. (The Pondside booth was festooned in purple and white asters.) Teams from Peacham and Harvey competed in a baseball game. The Peacham Methodist male quartet performed, as did an organ player and a violinist; a gramophone also played onsite. W.J. Bigelow, then owner/editor of the *St. Johnsbury Caledonian*, gave a speech advising farmers on how to keep their boys and girls on the farm. In keeping with that theme, Mrs. Roy (Clarica) Coursen of Ewell Hollow sang "Stay on the Farm." A poem, "The Farmer's Picnic Day, by Norris Smith, was also delivered:

The Farmer's Picnic Day

To the Pondside picnic grounds today
The Social Club have found their way
'Tis a farmers' picnic so they say
To be enjoyed by young and gray.



So please consider one and all,
Whate'er your stature, short or tall,
We're of the free and easy way,
So may you one and all be gay.

Long live the Club and members too,
With fellowship and friendship true,
And be our motto whate'er befall
All for one and one for all.

Well, "Gee," if this ain't picnic day
And all the hay-seeds done with hay.
Gosh! Now if we don't have a spree,
Down at the N. P. S. C.

I'll take my wife and kids along,
Perhaps the cat to sing a song,
Right down we'll go to Ewell's Hollow
Where all the folks wear red and yellow.

Well, 'tain't no use to tell the rest
For everybody knows what's best,
You'll have the best time of your life,
Yourself and kids, your cat and wife.

Thereafter, Pondside served as the site
of the Peacham town picnic, Ewell's

Hollow Schoolhouse events and, beginning in 1915, Schoolhouse reunions. It also provided a venue for the annual Old Home Days and meetings of Sons of Veterans, the Grand Army of the Republic and the Women's Relief Corps as well as a rummage sale, camping, fishing, and swimming. People came to Pondside from all over Vermont and many other states.

In 1920, Old Home Day was celebrated at Pondside. Again, about 200 people attended. Those who came could participate in wheelbarrow races, sack races, a blueberry pie contest, and other competitions. The "nail driving" competition was won by 18-year-old Hazel Douse, who drove 22 nails in a minute. Miss Elizabeth H. Blake, who was born and raised in Peacham and thereafter taught in Brattleboro's Pondville area as well as St. Johnsbury, also read a poem which she likely composed for the occasion, excerpted below:

Pondside

Once more we're meeting at the
Pondside
Friends are coming from far and wide
To meet at our Reunion here
And see the neighbors living near.

Just a family or two now live here
The rest are scattered far and near
The Stoddards and Craigs we still can
show
Familiar names that we all know.

The Ewell name we do not hear
Though Hattie is now living near
When her days in school were done
She began the work of teaching one.

She and "Will" are not at Pondside
Where every summer they reside
Selling lunches, candy and all
To the many parties that call.

Those dear old school days are o'er
Never to come back any more
But new lessons we may learn each day
As we journey on Life's long way.

KATHLEEN MONROE



Thelma and Charles White



Thelma and Charles by Richard Brown. Reprinted with the permission of Richard Brown.

Part 2 : Peacham in the 1920s and 30s: Memories of Thelma Schoolcraft White (1915-2014)

Editor's Note: Thelma Schoolcraft White (Thelma) lived in Peacham for more than 90 years. Thelma attended and taught in Peacham's schools. She and her husband, Charles, raised four children at their farm in East Peacham. Thelma was member of the Congregational Church and sang in the choir. She was also an ardent and expert naturalist. The Windsong Bird Sanctuary adjoining the White farm is part of her legacy to Peacham.

In 2004, Ann Mills (AM) interviewed Thelma in her East Peacham kitchen. This is the second of a two-part transcription of this interview. (The first part was published in the Spring, 2023 *Patriot*.) Some quotations have been

rearranged for continuity of subject matter; some repetition and interjections (umm, well, etc.) have been omitted.]

Thelma had her "first date" with the man she married, Charles White, at a Peacham Academy dance:

Thelma: Now, I have to tell this one. I don't know as I should, but, oh, I thought he was the handsomest man that ever lived, you know. And so, we had this dance or promenade. And he was a very tall man. Well, John Keenan was in my class, and he was very short. And Charles had just started to ask me — Keenan gets right in under and steps out here in front and asks me. Well, of course, he was my classmate. I couldn't very well turn him down.

AM: So, did Charles come over after and ask you?

Thelma: Oh, yes.

AM: Were there other events at high school? Football games or.

Thelma: No, but they had baseball and basketball, all right. And basketball was the big thing. That was the game. And other people came because there was a lot of competition, competition between Peacham and Groton for some reason. Why Groton? I don't know. Danville was taken for granted. Not that we thought we were going to win necessarily, but there would seem to be more competition between Groton and Peacham, and I'm not sure why.

AM: And the teams would travel to different schools to participate?

Thelma: I can remember going down to a basketball game in the wintertime and, you know, you come down the hill and there's a turn there. It was glare ice as we came, began sliding. I don't know if there's still a house right in the middle of that steep hill on the left as you're going down. And there was an apple tree there. And, as we slid down around, we could see a car stuck in that tree.

AM: Somebody had gotten there ahead of you!

Thelma: Yeah. And they'd gone fast enough so they'd gone up off the ground and into that tree. Now, we got down around.

TRANSPORTATION

AM: Now, that brings up the point of [school] transportation.

Thelma: I walked part of the time. The Penny Street School was only a half a mile away [from home]. But when it was time to go to high school, you either drove a horse or you walked. And it was a three mile walk each way. So, I think that's probably why I'm strong now.

AM: Sometimes you took a horse?

Thelma: Yeah. Well, I had a horse that was scared of everything. But I would take the cream to the creamery before I went to school and come back up. And

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we put our horses in—oh, what was her name? Right there in the village. Well, anyway, we'd put our horses in there. And one time, now, going down the [Penny Street] hill, I had two cans of cream. The whole back broke on one side. So, the can began going like this. And, of course, it would hit the horse's heels. I was going downhill, and I could not hold her. . .

AM: Sort of crisscrossing across the road?

Thelma: And, you know, you'd go a little bit that way and a little bit this way. And the horse's ankles were being hit every time. And, of course, that made it want to go faster and faster. Well, we got down, and there was Wesley Thresher with a load of kids. He yelled, and it [the horse] veered just right. So, it just missed them. And, then, the Butsons lived—where Mary Williams lives there now [Slack Street, near the intersection of Penny Street]. And they had a stone that was kind of like a bird by the mailbox. Well, as I went by, I must have pulled hard, too hard on the other rein, and it swung around like this. The iron on the sleigh just mowed that stone right off. Oh, the horse got loose then and ran. [He] was so scared that he ran into the red barn door, [which] knocked him down. . . . But I was tipped over. And I was sitting there with cream all around me. But it didn't hurt me.

AM: Your dad taught you how to drive a sleigh, or a wagon or whatever. And did you find that difficult? Did you enjoy doing that?

Thelma: Yeah, I loved, I always liked horses. And we raised horses here for a while, Morgan horses.

AM: And did your dad have a number of horses at home?

Thelma: No, just. Just a couple. One was, oh, awfully nervous. The other was a blind mare. And they were, they worked together. That nervous one looked out for that blind mare as though he was a person looking after the blind, even out in the pasture. She'd get a little lost and he'd come right and put his nose on her. And she'd follow him.

AM: All right. So, when did your family have an automobile?

Thelma: We had a Ford when I was 16. I learned. I got my license, my first license, and I had learned on the Model T. But you didn't drive them much in the winter because they didn't plow. They rolled the roads. And, so, you used your horses still for transportation. And when they came to the grade schools, they'd roll the yard, the play yard. And if, if you were lucky and they came when it was recess time—you know the seat was way up here. Some kid got a chance to go up and ride around while they were rolling. You were just always hoping it was going to be you. And, once in the dog's age, it was. But that was fun.

AM: So, if you were coming into church in the winter, would you have come by sleigh?

Thelma: Right.

AM: Didn't cars take over?

Thelma: At first, they didn't. They'd put up the car in the in the fall after the snow came and get the horses out again. But, then, gradually they began to plow the roads.

AM: And there must have been some interesting mud season stories with the new plows?

Thelma: Oh, the mud. Oh, the mud from here before they put this tar down was something fierce. But this was before we lived here. But you didn't go down this road to Barnet. You went back up to Peacham then down to West Barnet to get to Barnet.

AM: Because of the ruts?

Thelma: Yeah. And it was pretty bad between here and Danville in spots. You had to watch out you didn't get stuck. And, usually, in going, you'd pass somebody who was [stuck] and you'd have to help them.

AM: So, the roads were all dirt?

Thelma: Yeah, I think it was Danville Road was tarred first, before this one

was up to the four corners. . . . It was awful in through there. . . . Richard Brown got stuck one time. He had a little car of some kind, and he said, "I thought maybe it was better to stand on top of it and push it down to China than to try to get it out."

AM: Was there any public transportation?

Thelma: No. But there was something like a taxi, a town car. So, if people needed to go to St Johnsbury, he'd get them. And they could grocery shop or whatever they needed. Usually, he would drop them off somewhere and then pick them up at the certain place after a certain time.

AM: Was this in the 1930s?

Thelma: I think so, yeah. I can't remember how long that lasted, but probably through the forties. I can't remember just when. I'm awful on dates.

BECOMING A TEACHER AND MARRIAGE

AM: All right. So, you're in high school, and you've had a good experience. How many in your class when you graduated?

Thelma: There were 19 of us started. There were nine of us graduated.

AM: You enjoyed learning. And from high school you went on to . . .

Thelma: I went to Lyndon State. It wasn't Lyndon State then. It was Teacher Prep. And I worked for my board and room for Rita [unintelligible], a principal there at Lyndon. And that was an education in itself. There was another girl and I, and we did all of the work, including making her bed and taking care of her room, everything, and the buying. And that was a very good experience for us because we had a budget. And I don't know why she trusted girls that, you know, come in like that. Well, she said we were the nearest thing to daughters she ever had. But we worked hard, and you had an awful lot of studying then to do so, you know, college courses. So, we earned it.

AM: Where was your first teaching?

Thelma: My first was in Cabot. Two years in Cabot. And then to Peacham, the East Peacham schoolhouse.

AM: So, you were the one-room-school teacher?

Thelma: Yeah. And I had one boy who was 15 in that school. I was a little leery of that because in Cabot I hadn't had them quite that old. And I thought I was going to have a problem, but I didn't. I think partly because most of the teachers were extremely traditional, I guess you'd say, and taught just from the book. I believed in giving them the experience, if in any way you possibly could. And if we were studying some kind of nature, we went outside to see it instead of reading about it or we would read about it, then go out. Or, if you were studying Africa, bring in some stuff from Africa if you could possibly, or dress, or something, you know, for the occasion. And if they were reading a book, I thought they ought to make a play out of it. And we'd go to the [black]board. And, one time, I remember Mr. —let's see, Bob Roberts was the superintendent—and we had read a book and we decided that we'd better have a play. And I was at the blackboard writing down what the kids thought they ought to, what the characters were and what the character should say. And, finally, one of them came and whispered to me, "Mr. Roberts is here." And he'd come in, and he'd been there long enough to go through my register and get it and check it and everything. And I didn't ever know it. And the kids were

AM: Trying to let you know that you were being watched?

Thelma: Yeah, finally. But they didn't even notice it for a while, I guess.

AM: So, on average, what would you have for the number of students?

Thelma: Ten, or 8 to 12, I'd say because it would vary. There would always be something going on like the lumbering, as I said. We were living up on Cow Hill at that time. See, Charles and I went together for years because I had to teach the number of years that I went to school. And you couldn't teach after you were married.

AM: So, Charles's family moved into East Peacham and bought the store. Is that where you met him?

Thelma: Yes. And they had what they called an order team. That is, they would telephone orders, people would. And they delivered. It was a delivery service. That's how I first saw him. And he said he didn't remember me much until I sang a solo in church.

AM: And after you got married, you bought this farm?

Thelma: Yes. And then I had kids so I couldn't go back to teaching. I taught music in the schools, in Peacham, in Barnet. But regular, full-time teaching, I didn't [do].

AM: So, did all four [of your] children go to the East Peacham School and then to the Academy?

Thelma: Right.

HOW DID THINGS CHANGE?

AM: Was there any change from when you were as a youngster in the school system? Or was it pretty much the same?

Thelma: Well, it depended on the teacher. It was up to each teacher. And, so. I think some of the teachers were excellent. and some of them were not kind. Yeah, . . . this guy that's on the radio, his mother taught here. And, boy, was she a rough one. In fact, some of us objected to her. She was too, too rough with them. Really, I didn't like that. And there was one Goslant boy who was always getting hammered, and I think he rubbed her the wrong way or something. And, so, she took it out on him and probably saved some of the others. But it didn't seem right to me. In some ways, schools were stricter. In other ways, it was a much looser organization because it wasn't government oriented much.

As an example of looser organization, Thelma offered the case of Aileen Thresher, who began her studies at the Penny Street School at age four: We didn't have kindergarten then. But she and [her brother] John—John was the next one—were so close that

her parents said she she'd be terribly unhappy if she didn't go to school when he did.

AM: And that worked?

Thelma: Yes, They [the Thresher children] were all smart in books.

AM: The changes you've seen? What impresses you the most?

Thelma: Well. It's easier now because we have, everybody has electricity. By the way, there's a story—I can't think of the man's name—who did most of the wiring. But he used to find out whether he'd done a good job by wetting his finger and sticking it into the outlet thing.

AM: Did he have a long life?

Thelma: I don't remember. I remember his wife. She was quite a big, fat woman and had a hollow voice that kind of boomed. And my dad wanted to see him about something, and he went to their door and rapped on the door and this hollow voice said, "Come, I can't do it. Come in." He goes in, and there she is in her corset.: He couldn't believe his eyes.

AM: Well now! And what other changes other than the fact that it's easier farming?

Thelma: Easier because of electricity is about the only way I'd say easier. But you used to have to do the washing this way, you know, with the board out in the back rooms. And then it had to get into the kitchen, and it was a sloppy mess. They didn't have the public ones either that you could take laundry. But there were people who would do your washing if you couldn't get to it.

KEEP UP WITH PHA!
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