



# The Peacham Patriot

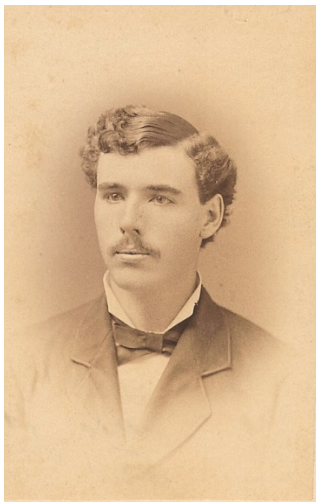
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Peacham Historical Association

Summer 2010

## **CHARLES B. BICKFORD, 15TH REG., CO. F, VT. VOLUNTEERS By Lois Field White**



“The Union needs more troops!”

President Lincoln issued a call for more volunteers for the Union Army on August 4, 1862, following the disastrous results of the Peninsula campaign. Vermont responded with 5 Regiments: the 12<sup>th</sup>., 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. The new soldiers, almost five thousand in number, were to serve for nine months. They were commanded by Brigadier General Edwin H. Stoughton of Bellows Falls. The new brigade, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vermont, was assigned to the Reserve Corps and to the defense of Washington. Colonel Redfield Proctor commanded the 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment and William W. Grout was the second in command. The 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment was composed of 9 companies from Caledonia, Orange, Orleans and Windsor Counties. Company F included men from Peacham and surrounding towns. These men were called the nine-month soldiers

Twenty-five young men from Peacham, among them Charles B. Bickford, the 21-year-old son of Benjamin and Bridget (Keyes) Bickford, answered the call. Charles was the youngest of the six Bickford children and the last to leave home. Charles' parents must have dreaded seeing him leave the Penny Street farm and go off to war. By 1858 Emily and Albert Bickford, the two oldest children, were still in Peacham but Russell, Carrie and Harvey had all left. The boys were living in the West. Now the youngest child was leaving.

The 25 Peacham men enlisted on September 16, 1862 and went into camp at Brattleboro on October 8. They were mustered into Federal service on October 22. Charles Bickford wrote home to his sister and brother-in-law, Emily and James Richardson Kinerson, describing the Company's journey. The trip took several days. Charles' letter is printed below as written and retains his spelling and grammar:

Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>, 1862

Dear Sister Emily

Here we are at last in Dixie surrounded by forts and batteries in all directions from us. We started from Brattleboro on Thursday last at 2 p. m. and took the cars and went to New Haven Connecticut & arrived there about 11 o'clock at night and there took the Boat and arrived at New York City at six the next morning where we found a breakfast ready for us, we stoped there til about eight then took two other Steam boats went down by Fort La Fayette to Port Monmouth, New Josey then took the cars at 2 P. M. and arrived at Cam\_\_\_ (sp) N. J. at 11 at night we then tok the ferry boat and crossed over to Philadelphia about three miles we then found a supper ready for us which was as good as we could

ask for. We then took our knapsacks on our backs and marched 5 miles to cars that night and started at 2 in the morning passed Williams at 5 and \_\_\_\_\_ DeGrass at 7 in the forenoon and arrived at Baltimore at noon (Saturday). We marched through the city to the Washington Depot about 2 miles. Then stacked our arms in the street and took dinner. Then stopped in the street all that afternoon till 7 at night then took the cars for Washington & arrived there about 6 the next morning went to one of the Government buildings & took breakfast then marched to an outbuilding about like a shed where the Reg't. stopped all day Sunday and that night in a place as close as they could lay. It rained all day Sunday and that night as hard as it could pore I was on wagon guard that day & night & found it a little damp in spots but we use rubber blankets and keep most of the rain off. Monday we marched to Arlington Heights about 6 or 7 miles from Washington and had to cross the Potomac on long bridge which is about 1 ½ miles long. From here we can see into Washington & see all that is going on there the Capital looms up above all other buildings there and it can be seen for miles around.. If the Rebels should take these Heights they could easily take Washington. The cars could easily reach it from here. We were reviewed today by General Casey it was a grand sight 12000 men moved in line of battle their bayonets & swords glistening in the sun shone like silver after it has been polished .General Casey is an old man with white locks but his eyes shine with all there youthful brightness and they then seem to take all in at a glance. I have no more time to write now for we have been on the march all day & have got to be ready to march at 6 tomorrow morning for Capital Hill. Excuse my haste & write soon. Remember me to all inquiring friends, to James and the children

Direct to Company F 14<sup>th</sup> Vt Reg't., Washington, D. C.

Your Brother Charles

During Charles' 10-month service his Company F. was stationed in Washington, Arlington, Fairfax Court House, Fairfax Station and other area locations. Charles told of camp life, described the village of Fairfax Court House and thanked his family for food and clothing they had sent. In a letter written March 9, 1863 he described the capture of their commanding officer, Colonel

Edwin Stoughton, by "secesh" guerillas organized and led by John Singleton Mosby who was called the "Grey Ghost of the Confederacy". Charles said the capture served Stoughton right because he chose to live in a fine house in town 4 miles from his command, rather than in the camp so the soldiers could protect him. General George Stannard replaced Stoughton and soon became famous.

The 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Regiments, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vermont Brigade, began the long march up through Maryland towards Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on June 25, 1863. They drew near to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on July 1 at which time the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Regiments were detached from the others to remain and guard the supply wagon trains. However, Major General Daniel Sickles of the Third Corps came along, discovered Stannard's two Regiments, and ordered the men of the 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment up to the battlefield. They traveled all night to get there and arrived with wagons of food for the troops early on the morning of July 2. The soldiers all ate breakfast together.

Later that day Col. Redfield Proctor was ordered (over his objections) to take his 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment and return to Rock Creek Church, 2 ½ miles from the battleground, to resume guarding the supply wagons. At noon that Regiment marched along Cemetery Ridge, passed the base of Little Round Top, continued on east between that hill and Big Round Top and left the battlefield. Therefore the soldiers of the 15<sup>th</sup> Vermont were not among those who fought and died at Gettysburg. However, the Vermonters of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Regiments were instrumental in the July 3 repulse of Pickett's Charge, known later as the turning point of the Civil War.

After the battle was over the various Regiments started the long journey back through Maryland to Washington and home to Vermont. On July 23 the men of the 15<sup>th</sup> Vermont reached Brattleboro and were mustered out on August 5, 1863.

George Benedict began assembling information on all the Vermont regiments before the war ended... Colonel Redfield Proctor wrote to him in January 1864, describing the 15<sup>th</sup> Vermont: "Now Benedict, though the 15<sup>th</sup> would have been 'historical' if kept with the Brigade & put into the fight, as it was we

claim nothing more than to have obeyed orders and taken good care of the train". Proctor was later elected Governor of Vermont and chose Benedict as state historian to compile a history of Vermont in the war of the rebellion.

Peacham boys returned home after their nine months' of service. Some re-enlisted; however, Charles Bickford did not. Instead, he went West. By January 5, 1864 he had arrived at the home of Russell and "Rett" (Amaretta) Bickford, his brother and sister-in-law, and their children. Russell had developed a successful business called R. K. Bickford, Lumber Commission Merchant, located at Cor. Lake and West Water Street, Chicago, Illinois. Charles worked for Russell for a time, then by March of that year he joined his brother Harvey Bickford and his wife Abba in Leavenworth, Kansas. Charles began working for Harvey and on March 20 wrote home telling his folks, "Harvey has been blessed with a little girl 3 days old, bright and smart I guess although I do not consider myself a competent judge". The baby was named Nellie.

By July of 1864 Charles and Harvey had delivered 30,000 lbs. of corn to Fort Seyon, Charles described, writing from Council Bluff, Kansas. The Bickford men continued hauling corn on Harvey's 13-wagon train through Indian country. Five to six yoke of oxen pulled each wagon.

Throughout 1865 Charles continued working for Harvey selling wood—and they were still running wagon trains to New Mexico. The Indians were very bad and twelve to fifteen thousand soldiers had been sent West to protect the settlers and travelers.

In 1866 Charles left Harvey's employ and traveled to Montana Territory where he cut and put up hay for the winter market, bought mules and a wagon and groceries to resell, and began mining for gold and selling wood. That winter his hay sold for \$30.00 per ton in gold dust, the only currency generally used. Greenbacks were seldom seen and were worth only 80 cents in gold dust.

Charles wrote Emily and James in July, 1867, relating that he had a wood yard and three teams drawing wood from the mountains. Charles had bought several hundred cords of wood and was

selling it at a good profit. He and his "pardner", a Charles R. Bickford from Stowe, Maine, were mining and they had taken out as much as \$8.00 worth of gold to a pan of dirt., Charles and his "pardner" later sold their mules and wagon for \$550.00 in gold.

Charles left Montana in September 1868 and returned to Harvey's in Leavenworth. He then began clerking for the Missouri Valley R.R. Transfer Company.

Charles' brother Albert Bickford wrote from Peacham in late December 1869 that their mother, Bridget Bickford, had died on November 14. Apparently Benjamin and Bridget were then living in Peacham Corner. Charles had visited his father in the spring of 1870 and had been offered money but did not accept it as because he did not want his family to think he was trying to get money from them. On December 18 Charles wrote his sister Emily that he could have used cash as business was not good because of trouble between the railroad companies. During this time Benjamin went to live with his daughter Emily and her husband James, where he remained until his death April 18, 1871. Emily wrote in her memoirs that Charles married Eliza Hutchins June 17, 1871.

Nine years passed.. By June of 1880 Charles had established a drug and variety store, C. B. Bickford and Co., in Troy, Kansas. He was also handling hard and soft coal and was helping Harvey on the cattle drives coming up from Texas. He wrote his sister Carrie Bickford Varnum in Marshalltown, Iowa from St. Joseph, Missouri, telling her he really liked the drug business better than anything he knew of and that he had built up a good trade. Charles and Eliza now had two children, Florence, born in 1874 and Bert, born in 1880. A third child, Ben, was born in 1882.

In February, 1901, Charles and his family sent birthday greetings to Emily on her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Charles wrote, "I should like very much to be with you when sugar time comes and eat hard sugar off the snow once more". Charles was then nearly 70; his daughter Florence Van Ness was 27, and sons Bert and Ben were 21 and 19 respectively. They were all in good health. Charles, Eliza and the boys

lived in Oklahoma City and Florence and her family were in Dexter, Missouri.

Probably Charles lived out his life in Oklahoma after his travels around the United States and the Territories. His Peacham parents, sister Emily and brother Albert kept track of him through his letters and those of his Western siblings. Charles, a farm boy from little Vermont, became prosperous as a result of his strong work ethic and willingness to take chances in the developing West. What a life!

Sources: *Peacham, the Story of a Vermont Hill Town*, by Ernest L. Bogart, 1948, published by the Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vermont

*People of Peacham*, by Jennie Chamberlain Watts and Elsie A. Choate, 1965, published by the Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vermont  
*Nine Months to Gettysburg*, by Howard Coffin, 1997, published by The Countryman Press, Woodstock, Vermont

*Vermont Hero, Major General George J. Stannard*, by George S. Maharay, 2001, published by White Mane Books, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania  
15<sup>th</sup> Vermont Infantry, from Wikipedia®, the free encyclopedia

Bickford/Kinerson Family Papers, Peacham Historical Association, Peacham, Vermont.



### President's Page

#### Jutta R. Scott, PHA President

My theme for this issue is the improvements PHA is making through increased use of information technologies. For our small historical association, technology is opening new doors.

The most exciting initiative is the republishing of our out-of-print town history: *Peacham: The History of a Vermont Hill Town*. This spring, on-demand printing technology allowed us to reissue Ernest Bogart's Peacham's town history without the high cost of traditional publishing. Thanks to the availability of a free digitized file from Google Books and the amazing capabilities of the Espresso Book Machine, PHA reprinted this book.

Another significant enhancement is availability of selected resources from PHA's collections. Technology is making it possible for PHA members

and other users to access from anywhere in the world some of PHA's resources on the Web. Last year, we made available on PHA's website, both the transcribed version and the image files of Peacham Union soldier, Mark Wheeler's account of his imprisonment at the Confederate prison at Andersonville, Georgia. Recently we added files of historic maps to the website. We plan to expand the availability of other resources in the future.

Technology also supports innovations in managing our membership. Our membership chair, Betsy Smith, lives in Canada, and her article describes how she "telecommutes". Most importantly, it allows a dedicated volunteer to handle the important membership responsibilities from afar.

Another example is the use of the PastPerfect software to manage and catalog items in PHA's collections. We now electronically catalog all new items and have an active program to add objects received prior to the installation of the software. For example, we prepared electronic records for all of PHA's paintings, prints and drawings. Taken together these records provided a needed inventory for insurance purposes.

Finally, I could not serve as PHA's President without reliance on e-mail and other electronic ways to handle my responsibilities. All Board members have e-mail accounts and much of our communication is via electronic means since I live only part of the time in Peacham. Moreover, one Board member, Karen Lewis, lives in San Francisco for half the year. Thanks to Skype, the software system that enables free communication, Karen participates in Board meetings from San Francisco.

These are just some of the ways in which PHA benefits from the use of information technologies, allowing us to offer more services, manage our operations more efficiently, and make the best use of our limited financial resources.

### PHA Republishes Peacham's Town History

New technologies allow PHA to print on demand copies of Ernest L. Bogart's *Peacham: The Story of a Vermont Hill Town*. First published in 1948 and reprinted in 1982, this comprehensive history of Peacham has been out of print for decades. Now PHA can make Bogart's Peacham history once

more available without the financial risks of traditional publishing and maintaining an inventory thanks to the Espresso Book Machine and a digital file from Google Books. The Espresso Book Machine is a print on demand machine that takes a PDF file and prints and binds a single book with a custom-made soft cover. Copies of Bogart's book will be printed on demand at the recently installed Espresso Book Machine at the Railroad Street Press, a division of the Boxcar & Caboose Bookshop in St. Johnsbury. PHA provided the digital copy that was scanned as part of the Google Books program. After we cleaned up some of the quirks of the Google scanning, there is only a minor difference between the quality of the 2010 book produced on-demand and the out-of-print 1982 edition. Now you can order a copy of Peacham's town history from PHA at a purchase price of \$35. Copies are also available for purchase at the Peacham Library, the Craft Guild during the summer or by ordering via PHA's website.

### **“It's a New World, Golda”**

#### **By Betsy Smith, PHA Membership Chair**

Thus spoke Tevye in “Fiddler on the Roof.” With confusion, bemusement and resignation he referred to the upheavals in family life resulting from the progressively non-traditional marriages of his three oldest daughters, and to the communal uprooting of the village of Anatevka in Tsarist Russia. But really, Tevye had no idea! A new world has unfolded around us at such a rapid pace over the last decades that we've come no longer to expect things to be the same a year from now as they are today. We both gleefully and anxiously await the next innovation, the next invention, the next idea that will change the way we act, the way we interact, what we expect, when we expect it and even how we think. And the Peacham Historical Association, backward looking though it's agenda may appear to be, is not immune to the effects of this new world. In fact it uses new technologies in any number of ways to pursue it's objective of holding on to our community's past for the benefit of the community of the future. This willingness to embrace the new to facilitate its work has led the PHA to begin an experiment with telecommuting on the part of its membership chair. Never would I have expected to be telecommuting. But here I am, sitting most of the year in the

“quaint” and lovely town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, while following through on my responsibilities to the PHA.

Three major innovations have made this possible. One is the PHA's move to “rolling” membership. Instead of having a membership year of July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>, the membership year is now personal to each member. If, for example, we get your dues on November 1<sup>st</sup> this year, then your personal membership year is November 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup>.

The second is a computerized membership database which makes it possible to keep track of a multitude of different membership years. It is now possible, at any time during the year, to remind members that their membership is expired or expiring and to encourage them to renew.

The third is the ever increasing number of people in the broader Peacham community who use email. From NOTL, above the Niagara River and Lake Ontario, I can email you – whether you're at that moment sitting in Peacham looking at the lilacs or the snow, in California contemplating the Napa Valley vineyards, or in China or India or Germany or France. I may not know where you are and you may not know where I am, but we can nonetheless be in touch. It is a new world!

### **Historic Peacham Maps Available on PHA Website**

As part of our efforts to make resources available to members and other users, we are making several digitized maps available on the PHA website. PHA collections include historic maps of Peacham from its earliest settlement. They present a wealth of information about Peacham in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The digitized maps include the manuscript map of Peacham lotting plans that show the division of land among the pioneer settlers in early 1800's. Two of the maps were printed in gazetteers of Caledonia County. The maps of the 12 school districts in 1875 show not only the location of the one-room schoolhouses but also names of property owners in 1875.

You will find the following digitized maps on the Collections page in the Maps section: [Peacham Lotting Plans](#) Originally prepared by David Martin and then recopied in 1912 and again in 1926. Original map is held by the Vermont State Archives.

1858 Walling Map: Published in Walling, H.P. *Map of Caledonia County*. 1858.

1875 F.W. Beers' Atlas of Caledonia County: Peacham published in Beers, F.W. *Atlas of Caledonia Co., Vermont*. New York, Beers, 1875.  
Maps of Peacham School Districts, 1875: The separate maps were enlarged from the 1875 F.W. Beers' Atlas of Caledonia County by Tracy McIntyre, Geographic Information Systems Specialist at the Northeastern Vermont Development Association in 2006.

Old Cellar Holes. Property Owners in Peacham, Vermont. Copied and enlarged from map of. 1875. Aug. 1944 by Louise Bayley. Reproduced by D. Wilcox, Mar. 1964. The map was scanned by Tracy McIntyre, Geographic Information Systems Specialist at the Northeastern Vermont Development Association in 2009. The original map and a key to the cellar hole numbers is part of *People of Peacham*. Jennie Chamberlain Watts and Elsie A. Choate compilers. Edited by Richard Wood with assistance from the Peacham Historical Association. Montpelier, Vt.: Vermont Historical Society, 1965.

### **PHA Wishes the Peacham Library Happy 200<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

This summer PHA will help to celebrate the Library's Bicentennial in several ways. A special exhibit at the Historical House will tell the story of two hundred years of library service through historic photographs and objects relating to the Library. The Ghost Walks on July 3 and on Foliage Day will feature four Peacham Library personages. The "ghosts" include Thaddeus Stevens who helped to start the Juvenile Library Society in 1810. Another personage is George B.M. Harvey, a generous donor of books to the Library and American Ambassador to Great Britain during Warren Harding's Presidency. The other two "ghosts" are John Cowles and Anna Renfrew. John Cowles was a librarian/storekeeper and served as librarian for 30 years, having the books on one side of his store. Mrs. Renfrew continued this library/variety store combination. She housed and ran the library in the Peacham General Store. Come and hear their stories from the Library's past at the Peacham Corner Cemetery on July 3 and September 30 at 2p.m.

Finally, Lorna Quimby, PHA's Curator, will be the guest speaker at the Library's Annual Meeting on

July 12<sup>th</sup> and will speak about the role of the Library in Peacham in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Update on Collections Management Assessment Recommendations**

For the past six months, the PHA Board has worked on implementing recommendations in the consultant's report for the Museum Assessment Program (MAP). The Program is administered and funded by the American Association of Museums with support from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Many of the consultant's recommendations have been incorporated into PHA's Strategic Plan that is available on PHA's website. The initial priority is revising the PHA collections policy and procedures manual. For the PHA Board members the process is an important vehicle to learn about PHA's collection management, review collection management policies, establish new protocols, and to revise practices. The Board anticipates that the new PHA Collections Management Policy will be completed by early fall.

The MAP project also served to create a sense of urgency around the issue of the security of the PHA collections. The PHA Board has focused special attention on ways to mitigate some of the risks.

PHA houses its collections in two historic, wooden buildings. Fire is a potential danger in an older wooden building. To strengthen PHA's emergency preparedness, we have taken several steps to ensure the protection of the historic buildings and the objects, archives, and records that PHA holds in trust. One step was a risk assessment conducted by the Peacham Volunteer Fire Department. The recommendations from their site visits suggested several fire prevention improvements, and we have implemented many of them already and will make all of the recommended changes.

A second step is the development of an emergency plan for responding when a disaster actually occurs. Preparing the plan underscored the importance of proactive identification of risks and the development of policies and procedures intended to prevent damage to the collections. To be ready to react promptly and effectively in the event of an emergency, we developed detailed plans how to

protect, evacuate, or recover collections and identified local and state resources that would provide assistance during and after a disaster. The Board formed the PHA Disaster Response Team to respond to emergencies and aid in the recovery efforts. We also adapted the Council of State Archivists Pocket Response Plan that includes names and phone numbers of Peacham volunteers who will provide help in the event of a disaster, information and guidance that will be needed during the first 24 hours after an event occurs, and emergency management information specific to Peacham.

### **Peacham Historical Association Research Facility Committee**

At the present time, the Peacham Historical Association stores its manuscript and archival collections in the Old Town Office. On the first floor, PHA uses the Old Town Vault to store its most valuable collections. PHA uses the entire area on the second floor for work space, storage of textiles and other archival materials, and reference library. The present space is not only severely overcrowded, but lacks fire-prevention systems, has no temperature or humidity control systems, and the steep stairs make access difficult for many and impossible for handicapped users. To ensure the preservation of and access to PHA's research collections, PHA needs accessible, fireproof, secure space with stable environmental conditions for the collections and adequate working space for volunteers and researchers. At its January 5, 2010 meeting, the Executive Board took an important step towards that goal and established the Peacham Historical Association Research Facility Committee. Its members are: John Coffin, Bob Fuehrer, Lynne Lawson, Jutta Scott, Chair, and Diana Senturia.

The charge to the Committee is to develop functional requirements for a new PHA archival facility and to evaluate potential options for moving the collections from the Old Town Office. The Committee will recommend the best option to the PHA Board.

At its first meeting, the Committee agreed that the facility should provide for the following functions: environmentally appropriate, secure collections storage; collections management and processing space (cataloguing, documentation, preservation, treatment, research, preparation for exhibition, etc.);

and workspace for collections staff and researchers. Equally important, the facility must provide handicap access and meet current public use requirements. Over the next months, the Committee will refine specific space needs.

### **With Grateful Thanks**

PHA is grateful for two generous additions to its collections during the past months. Raymond Blanchard donated a copy of the *History of the Blanchard Family* written by Kenneth Colby. The Blanchard family has deep roots in Peacham. Six Blanchard brothers, Abiel, Peter, Joel, Abel, Reuben and Simon were among Peacham's earliest settlers and arrived from New Hampshire around 1780. Several of the Blanchard brothers' homesteads remain in Peacham today. A historical postcard with a dramatic view of the top of Devil's Hill was donated by Jerry and Diana Senturia. The PHA collections have been greatly enriched by their donations over the years, and the postcard is a further gift.

### **Peacham Historical Association 2010 Calendar of Events**

#### **Sundays, July 4 to September 26, 2:00 -4:00pm**

PHA Historical House Opens for the Season. A special exhibit will celebrate the Library's Bicentennial: Peacham Library 1810 -2010.

#### **Saturday, July 3rd :**

Peacham Fourth of July Celebration  
Historical House and Blacksmith Shop will be open  
The PHA Ghost Walk will be held at the Peacham Cemetery at 2p.m.

#### **Sundays July 3 - July 31 at the Historical House:**

Artist's Exhibit: The Memory Book Drawings by Nancy Leigh Shaw. Display of nine charcoals inspired by our teenage years in Peacham.

#### **Tuesday, August 10: PHA Annual Meeting**

Program: "I Have Not Forgotten You": Vermont Women and the Western Movement. Presented by Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith. Through diaries, letters, and reminiscences the speakers will share the experiences of Vermont women who headed westward in the mid-1800's.

#### **Thursday, September 30:**

#### **Peacham Fall Foliage Celebration**

Historical House and Blacksmith Shop will be open.  
The PHA Ghost Walk will be held at the Peacham Cemetery at 2p.m.

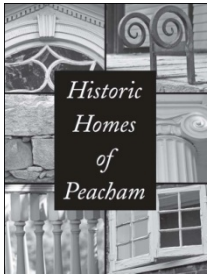
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Peacham Historical Association

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