

CAMBRIDGE HARKENER

CELEBRATING THE HERITAGE OF CAMBRIDGE, VERMONT

Vol. XVII, No. 3

November 2022

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CHS President Joel Page wrote the following brief history in 2008. Much has happened since then, but this is an interesting look back at the early days of the Cambridge Historical Society.

The Cambridge Historical Society - a brief unofficial history

by Joel Page

The Cambridge Historical Society (CHS) was incorporated in 1987, but I think its roots lie in two community ventures that commanded a lot of attention and organizing during the early 1980s. These ventures were the Old Town Hall preservation effort, and the National Register of Historic Places Nomination that led to creation of the Jeffersonville Historic District.

The Old Town Hall (which now houses the Town Clerk's office and Post office) had fallen into disuse and was in very rough shape by the 1970s. A group of concerned citizens started a preservation campaign which began with a fundraiser (a Thomas Curtin art show) in 1980, and which continued until 1989. Most of those involved became members of the Cambridge Historical Society.

The National Register process was mostly the work of Jane Shaw. I think Jane recognized that having the Old Town Hall placed in the National Register of Historic Places would improve its chances of preservation. The Jeffersonville Historic District designation occurred in 1986.

"Vintage Village Days", also orchestrated by Jane, was prompted by the Historic District designation. This event occurred for a of couple years in the late 80s, and included exhibits and tours of some of the homes in the Historic District. The documentation and publicity surrounding the National Register designation and Vintage Village Days heightened community awareness and interest in the Town's history and led to interest in the Historical Society.

When the Historical Society was created in 1987, most of the people who had participated in the above activities became involved. For several years there were monthly meetings with interesting slide shows and talks. Stubb Wells' presentations were especially popular, and his show on the history of skiing in Cambridge was repeated several times over the years.

In 1989 the efforts of the Old Town Hall preservation group (and the Historical Society, which had become involved) came to fruition when the Town voted to restore the structure. However, those efforts were dashed when a petition led to reversal of that decision the next year. In hindsight, I think this caused many who had worked hard on the Old Town Hall preservation (and the Historical Society) to become disillusioned and lose some of the energy that they had been putting into the CHS. Also, the interest that naturally occurs early in an organization began to wane as the novelty wore off. Some, like myself (President at the time), had competing work and family commitments that took priority. There was also a problem of not having a good meeting space. Participation in the CHS waned, and by the early 90s the organization had become inactive. That remained the case until about 1998, when some new blood and a new building intervened. In the meantime the Old Town Hall restoration was back on track with the Post Office as a paying tenant.

Early History of Cambridge

by Ida Morgan Anderson

Beginning in 1935, Ida Morgan Anderson began serializing a column on the History of Cambridge in the *Cambridge Town Crier*. Many of our readers may remember the series of 27 Installments. The Harkener continues publishing the installments for a new audience on the assumption that the copyright (if it ever existed) has long since expired. We hope you will enjoy these "blasts from the past."

Installment Fifteen

As the mail for the two villages, Cambridge Boro and Cambridge Center, often got mixed, Nathaniel Read, son of the first Nathaniel and a great admirer of Thomas Jefferson, sent a petition to Congress asking that the name of Cambridge Center be changed to Jeffersonville, which was granted. Mr. Read graduated from the University of Vermont in 1811, taught school for two or three years, then studied law with Judge Turner of St. Albans and Joshua Sawyer of Hyde Park, was admitted to the bar in 1816 and began practice in Jeffersonville where he died in 1873 at the age of eighty-five. He was postmaster at his village for twenty years.

The first villagers came from good old stock. In 1885 the Rev. Mr. Edwin Wheelock, son of Samuel & Patty (Adams) Wheelock, was called as pastor of the Congregational church. His mother's relatives were closely related to John Adams, the second president. He was born in Cambridge in 1822 and brought up on a farm. He received what education the village school afforded, and then went to Burlington where he graduated with honors

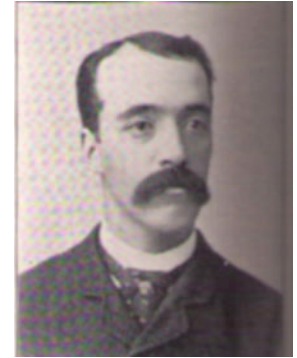


Rev. Edwin Wheelock

from the University of Vermont in 1849. He held this pastorage continuously for over fifty years until this health failed in 1901, and was greatly beloved by the people of this and surrounding towns. During his long pastorate he married more than eight hundred couples and conducted the services at more than twelve hundred funerals. He died in 1907 at the age of 85. He married Miss Laura Pierce of Eden in 1851. Of their six children four lived past middle age. George L. for many years was connected with the Century Publishing Co. Lucy, the second daughter is the founder and head of the Wheelock Kindergarten Training School at Boston.

Jonah Brewster, who came from Bennington, Vt., is said to have cleared the first land where Jeffersonville now stands. Here near the Brewster river, which was named in his honor, he lived till his death in 1833. Three of his descendants, Solon, Buel and Ralph, live at Pleasant Valley. They are lineal descendants in the tenth generation of Elder William Brewster who came over in the Mayflower.

D. H. Chapman, who until recently lived at the "Harbor", traces his ancestry on his mother's side back to the year 1067 and Knight Sir Boynton and counted an Earl among his ancestors, John and William Boynton, sons of Sir Matthew Boynton, settled in Rowley, Mass., in 1638, Mr. Chapman being a descendant of John. Abial Boynton, his greatgrand-



D. H. Chapman

father, and six brothers fought in the Revolution, ranking from private to colonel.

At the western end of the village lived Isaac Newton Bulkeley, brother of Charles Bulkeley who was one of the early settlers of Montpelier. He was a hatter by trade and made wool and beaver hats. They were descendants of Rev. Peter Bulkeley, a non-conformist minister in England who traced descent from Robertus de Bulkeley on the the [sic] Magna Charta Barons in 1215. Peter Bulkeley married Grace, daughter of Sir Richard Chetwode. He came to America in 1636, founded Concord, Mass., and was pastor of the first church there. Their eldest son, Rev. Gershom Bulkeley, a Harvard graduate, was a pastor in New London, chaplain in Indian wars, a noted surgeon and a writer. His grandson, Peter, was the father of Isaac Newton Bulkeley. Isaac Bulkeley's great, great grand-daughter, Dr. Dorothy Lang, who graduated cum laude, from the Burlington Medical College in 1924, was the first woman ever admitted to that college. Dr. Lang has a large practice in New York City and has married Dr. Craig Bulger.



Continued from Page 1

Around 1998 new interest in the CHS developed, particularly when the Masonic Lodge (Warner Lodge) on School St. in Jeffersonville was offered for sale to the Historical Society. The decision to purchase the Warner Lodge was a pivotal event for the CHS. In little more than a year the CHS raised \$45,000 that enabled purchase of the property in 1999. The Cambridge Historical Society now had a home! Some grants were obtained which allowed for significant restoration of the building. The entire purchase and restoration process generated much interest and participation by the community.

From 1999 until 2008 the CHS activities were more or less steady and well attended, based out of the Warner Lodge. We had monthly meetings, usually with an interesting program, a newsletter, the Farm Days event in October, an annual History Expo event, a potluck, Holiday party, and annual dinner. Then in 2008 we received a gift of the use (and responsibility for) the Sweet property on Main Street. This is a wonderful property with great potential, but it is proving very challenging to figure out how the CHS can use and pay for this property. This chapter in the life of the CHS is still being written. Stay tuned for developments! [Remember this was written in 2008 when we had just acquired the Sweet property.]

Short Addendum to the Short History (c 2022)

It took the CHS a while to figure out what to do with the gift of the Sweet House. Use of the building as a museum or meeting space was explored by turned out not to be feasible. Eventually, the society rented the property to the Mary Elizabeth Preschool. That made the Society a landlord, an unfamiliar business for a historical society. In 2021, the Board of the CHS made the difficult decision to put the sale of the Sweet House in front of the membership. In July 2021, at a meeting of the CHS Board, the members present voted to sell the house and part of the property while retaining ownership of the barn and the property behind the house. The Mary Elizabeth Preschool was given first chance to purchase the property, but unfortunately could not meet the price. The Sweet House was eventually purchased by Matthew and Andrea Stanley who are using the property responsibly and continuing to respect the historic character of the house.

The Society has begun to offer monthly programs again and attendance has been slowly recovering from the COVID doldrums. We are recording all programs and making them available on our Web site and on YouTube. In future, we expect to offer remote access to our programs so that everyone can have the opportunity to attend. The Cambridge Historical Society is looking to the FUTURE to keep the HISTORY of Cambridge alive.

Cambridge Historical Society Annual Holiday Party is BACK



On Saturday December 3rd the CHS will celebrate the holidays with their annual party, including Roberta Marsh's Holiday Quiz.

All are welcome to attend.

Bring a gift (not worth more than \$15) for the Yankee Swap and your favorite Holiday snack (cookies, hors d'oeuvres, nibbles) to share.

We'll supply the beverages - perhaps Peter Opstrup's special egg nog.

Warner Lodge, Saturday December 3rd - 6:00 pm.

Hope to see you then.

Membership Application/Renewal

Please complete this form and mail to: Cambridge Historical Society
PO Box 16
Jeffersonville, VT 05464-0016
or email to: rgtle@stoweaccess.com

New

Renewal

Name _____

Address _____
Number Street Town State Zip

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Membership Category

Individual \$15.00

Family \$25.00

Business \$25.00

Please consider becoming a:

Patron \$500.00

Benefactor \$1,000.00+

If you have suggestions about program topics or have some great ideas for fundraisers,
please let us know by listing your ideas below.

Cambridge Historical Society
PO Box 16
Jeffersonville, VT 05464



Our Holiday Party on December 3rd will cap 2022,
the year we were back with programs for all.

We'll be taking a break until March, when we will be presenting more interesting programs on the history of Cambridge and Vermont. Next year we hope to begin streaming our programs but until then, you can see some of 2022's programs on YouTube. Check out Bonnie Hitchcock's program on Cambridge Post Offices on our Web site (cambridgehistoricalsociety.org)

If you have an idea for a program please let us know. You can call Georgeana Little at (802) 335-2002 or email rgtle@stoweaccess.com

We have included a Membership Application in this issue. All memberships renew in January. You can renew early if you would like.

This Newsletter is one of the perks of membership, so to continue receiving The Harkener renew your membership, and THANK YOU.