

CAMBRIDGE HARKENER

CELEBRATING THE HERITAGE OF CAMBRIDGE, VERMONT

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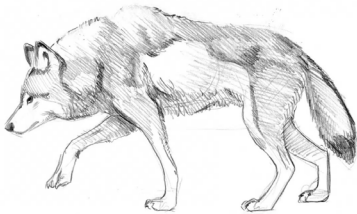
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Stygles Circus and Wild Animal Show

*Notes by Floyd D. Putnam, Williston, Vermont, October 22, 1957 Age 71 1/2 yrs.
 Born at Pleasant Valley, helped with the circus, painted cages, etc.
 Copied by Mrs. Glenna Holmes Brush, Cambridge, Vermont*

Carrol N. Stygles, son of Nelson Stygles, was born on a back road in what is now Hyde Park, Vermont. He was one of four children - Otto, Osmond and Maude, all deceased.

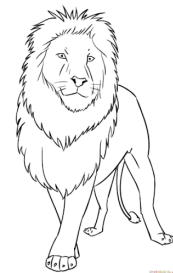
When he was a young man he came to Pleasant Valley, in Cambridge, Vermont, to Earl Prior's farm and started a meat business and slaughter house. He sold meat from the cart in Cambridge and nearby towns for some time. He married Prior's oldest daughter, Julia, and soon after bought the Buker Store at the Valley. He moved the old store to a lot across the road and built a large modern store with a dance hall above. The dances in this hall were very popular, and city orchestras played at regular dances which were attended by many from surrounding towns. He also did a successful business in the store, people coming from many miles to trade for nearly everything that a farmer or his family would need. Carrol Stygles' first animals were a family of coons that he and others tracked to a hollow tree on West Hill, and by holding a grain sack over the hole where they entered, was able to catch them alive and carry them home on his back in the sack. (Imagine scratching and fighting coons on one's back!)



A farmer gave him two baby coons about the size of rats and they grew up tame as pets and had the freedom of the little village. Many nights I heard them at the maple sugar tub in the woodshed chamber, and if the door was open between, they would sleep on the foot of my bed.

The next animal was an ugly, untamed wolf that he never was able to tame; had to keep him chained out beside the store. He then added foxes, deer, bear and "Dewey" the lion who was very clever and used to get out of his cage and visit around the neighborhood. He also had an eagle, more wolves, a wild cat or lynx, hawks and numerous other wild animals.

He made an animal house out of an old barn near the store, built cages, also wagons with cages to transport the animals around, for he now had the show fever. He bought a tent and set it up on the flat above his house and gathered together a crew of performers: slack wire walkers, trapeze artists, acrobats, clowns, bareback riders, the Murdock Brothers, who were general character actors and many other acts popular at the time. There was also a Band with gay uniforms. Many of the perform-



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 Twelve

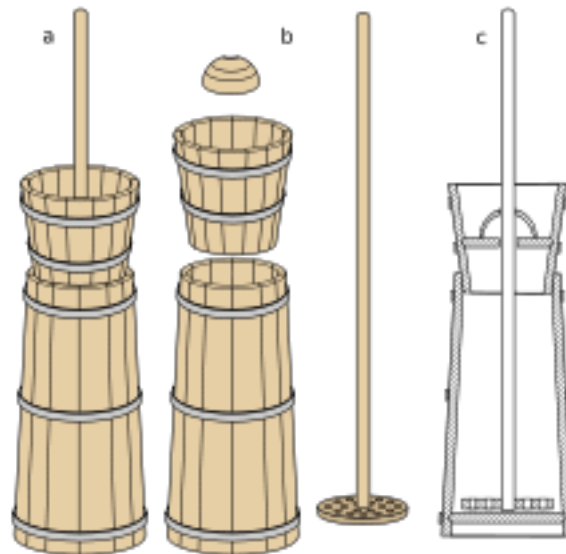
Dairying early became the principal industry. Creameries were unheard of and every family made their own butter. Separators and butter color had not been invented, so milk was set in ten quart pans and every farmer raised two or three bushels of carrots for butter color. On churning day the housewife grated four or five carrots, turned the pulp into a cloth and squeezed out the juice. Experience and good judgment were the only guides to how much was necessary to give the butter the desired June color. It was a disagreeable task, leaving badly stained hands and skinned fingers.

When some lovelorn young man said to his reluctant sweetheart, "If you'll only marry me I'll grate the carrots every churning day," that settled it. Only a heart of stone could resist that plea. For a while he would fulfill the agreement and then would come a day when he would say, "Almiry, I'm in an awful hurry. Won't you grate the carrots this time?" He had got to water the steers or bed the hens or some other urgent job. So Almira did it, and begun what would be her work forever more. Right then Jove laughed at lovers' vows, and Love's young dream got its first set back.

Butter making at home is now an almost forgotten art. After the buttermilk was drawn off, any remaining in the butter was thoroughly washed out by rinsing two or three times with cold water. There were no butter workers then, so it was worked by hand. The housewife prepared her hands by washing them with soft soap, and water as hot as could be borne. Then they were cooled by washing in the coldest water obtainable till they were cold. This was so the butter would not "stick". The butter was placed on the pastry board or great wooden tray, which had been washed in hot and then cold water, and kneaded like a loaf of bread, till the salt was thoroughly mixed through it. An ounce of salt to a pound of butter was the rule. It was packed in tubs, covered with a cloth and layer of salt and was ready for market.

Tubs held 10, 20, 30 and 50 pounds and many men were employed in making them. A load of tubs, the two-horse wagon with its high, wide rack stacked full, was a familiar sight as they were delivered at the local stores.

Saturday was market day in Cambridge, and farmers from this and adjoining towns carried their butter to the village to sell. A Mr. Spaulding, and later, his son, bought butter at the back room of what is now H. A. Hawley's store, and all the merchants did a rushing business.



Continued from Page 1

ers “doubled in brass” as they say and perched on top of the bandwagon that headed the parade of, I should say, ten or a dozen cages, drawn, of course, by horses. The cages were followed by property wagons, etc.

Rehearsals were held for some time and finally the show was ready to start. One of the first stands was a Lamoille Valley Fair at Morrisville, Vermont. A farmer came to hire out as a “barker” and had a spiel a yard long which he could do pretty well when only a few people were around; however, when he got up on the box and looked out over a sea of faces, his knees gave out and he whispered “Ladies and gentleman, come in and see the animals.” That finished him as a “barker”. The circus played many towns in Chittenden County and made a tour of the northern part of the state in Orleans and Newport, as I remember.

Carrol Stygles’ circus met with disaster in Franklin County at St. Albans. There the sheriff closed the show and he was heavily fined, I heard, for exhibiting a circus without a license. This incident broke up the show and the performers disbanded, some to join other shows. I remember the Murdock Brothers joined a medicine show playing in the vicinity of Cambridge, Vermont. The animals were disposed of at various parks and animal farms, the tent and equipment were disposed of over a period of time. “Dewey” the lion went to Franklin Park in Boston and the wolf broke his chain and escaped. He was killed in Starksboro, Vermont with a club as he fought with some dogs. A piece of chain and a collar identified him.

Carrol Stygles then sold his store to Fred Plummer and opened a store at Underhill Flats near the Railroad Station. He then began to buy and sell farms (at a profit, probably) around Jericho and other nearby towns. He never got over his love for animals and many of the older people will remember the bears he kept in a yard near his home in Jericho, near the old Howe Mill. He was a born trader, and accumulated a comfortable sum by trading and selling farms. He lived to a goodly age and is buried in Jericho, beside his wife in the family lot.

Carrol Stygles had a host of friends in all walks of life, most of whom called him “Carl”. So endeth the story of the man, we believe, organized the only circus in Vermont at the little hamlet of Pleasant Valley in Cambridge, Vermont. This happened in the early 1900s, more than 50 years ago.



Upcoming CHS Programs

*Wednesday November 10th 7:00 pm
Warner Lodge, School Street, Jeffersonville*

Cambridge Historical Society Annual Meeting

It has been another strange year for the historical society. We were able to hold one in-person program in August - Linda Radtke's program From the Parlor to the Polling Place. Held at the Cambridge Christian Fellowship in Cambridge Village, the program was well attended by over 20 people. We also experimented with a Zoom program on the History of the Churches in Cambridge, presented by Beth Cole. The program was well received and more such programs may be presented going forward. However, we would like to return to our monthly meetings which include both interesting programs and a chance to visit with friends, old and new.

On July 1st, we held a special meeting to determine if the membership would approve the sale of the Sweet House. The vote was unanimous and the Board has been preparing the property for sale and it is currently on the market. We hope to have news soon on the sale, which will include a covenant on maintaining the historic nature of the building.

Our annual meeting, including reports by the Officers and election of Officers and Board Members, will be in-person at the Warner Lodge in Jeffersonville on November 10th. All are welcome.

*Saturday, October 23rd 1:00 pm
Warner Lodge, School Street, Jeffersonville*

Catching People's Stories Jane Beck

Jane Beck has used the recorded interview as her major source of material for exhibits, media, and written materials throughout her career. This technique puts the focus on people, personal history, family stories, experiences, values, and attitudes—ordinary people often doing extraordinary things. This is a reflective talk on why people tell stories, what they mean to an individual, and examples of how they are used. This talk is free, open to the public, and accessible to those with disabilities.

For more Information or to RSVP (please), contact Cambridge Arts Council at cambridgeartsvt@gmail.com or call (802) 644-1418.

Catching People's Stories is a Vermont Humanities program hosted by the Cambridge Historical Society and sponsored by the Cambridge Arts Council.



Cambridge Historical Society
PO Box 16
Jeffersonville, VT 05464



We want to thank everyone who has stuck with us through these very strange times. We have been trying new ways to keep the membership informed of happenings and to present programs as best we could. We were not successful at all of it, but not for want of trying.

We hope next year will bring us together again. If you have an idea for a program, either one you would like to present or a topic you would like us to consider, please let us know. You can call Georgeana Little at (802) 335-2002 or email to rgtle@stoweaccess.com

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