

CAMBRIDGE HARKENER

CELEBRATING THE HERITAGE OF CAMBRIDGE, VERMONT

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CHS Now Has Full Ownership Of The Sweet Property!

On August 9, 2019 the Cambridge Historical Society (CHS) obtained full ownership of the Sweet property at 208 Main Street in Jeffersonville. This was accomplished by a Quit Claim Deed from the Cambridge Town School District to CHS. The transfer of the School District’s interest resulted from many years of discussions with the Cambridge School Board, and a vote by the citizens of Cambridge at town meeting in March, 2019.

By way of background, in 2008 the CHS received a gift from Arlan Sweet. In his will, Mr. Sweet gave the CHS the perpetual use of his house, outbuildings, and 1.2 acres of land. The property is in the Historic District and is an important part of the historic Main Street landscape. The gift was restricted (in broad terms) to using the land for educational purposes (it presently is leased as a pre-school). The will granted



the Cambridge Elementary School a reversion interest (ownership would revert to the school) in the event that the CHS ceased to use the property as indicated. The unintended effect of the reversion was to limit the ability of the CHS to proceed with any long range plans for the property, since we did not fully own it.

We are very excited to be the full owner of this important,

historical property. We anticipate that the pre-school will continue as a tenant, and we plan to continue using the barn to store larger items in our collection. How the property will be used 10, 20, 50 years from now will be up to the CHS, without strings attached. If you have a vision for how this property could best be used, please let the Board know!

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. With this issue of the Harkener we begin publishing those installments for a new audience on the assumption that the copyright (if it ever existed) has long since expired. We hope you will enjoy this "blast from the past."

Installation Two

During the winter a limited supply of logs were got out to supply the settlement and to build the gristmill which would take but a few days.

It was what was known as a "gig mill", the stone being on the same shaft with the water wheel, and the stone and wheel were of the same size. These mills were built on Seymour River near Cambridge Boro, and as they were the only mills in operation at that time, settlers came from miles around to get their grinding and sawing done. As late as 1791 they came from Morrystown to Cambridge to mill, a distance of twenty miles.

The first miller was a Mr. Poor, and the lot of land which he owned and occupied is now a part of E. J. Gates' pasture and is still known as th "Poor lot."

The mill dam was not very strong and was soon washed out, but some inventive genius rose to the occasion. A pine tree near the house on the Merritt Morgan farm at "the harbour" was cut and a great cavity burned in the stump. A pestle was adjusted to a spring-pole and in this rude mortar corn was pounded out, getting meal and hominy at the same time, until the dam could be rebuilt.

Other mills were soon built in different parts of the town and the settlers were thus spared many of the hardships endured by the pioneers in other towns of this county. Cambridge owed so much of its early prosperity to these small mills that their history is worth recounting.

The mills built by the Fassetts on Seymour river, at first were near what is not called the Rogers bridge. They had been moved nearer the Boro, and had

changed owners till they came into the hands of Peleg Stearns. In 1822 Ira Scott built a stone dam for Stearns which he warranted for five years. Thirty days after the warrant expired, a hard storm in the night tore out the dam and washed it into a hole.

It was replaced by a wooden dam. At the time of the great slide on Mr. Mansfield in 1846 the saw and gristmill were carried off by the high water and were never replaced.

In 1795 Frederick Parker built a sawmill at the junction of Bacon, Smedley and Boardman brooks, above Jeffersonville, the second sawmill in town. About twenty years later it passed into the hands of Michael Phillips. The slabs were thrown out at the lower end of the mill channel

so hat the water set back. One rainy day when the pond was full of water, it occurred to some ingenious person that if the lower end of the pile was set on fire the brook could easily be cleared out.

"The best laid plans of mice and men oft go astray," and before they realized it, the fire had crept up through the dry slabs and the mill was burning briskly. They saved the saw and the cant-hook and watched the rest burned down.

In 1820 French and Ingles leased the privilege and built a sawmill which became a sort of trading commodity, for when there was nothing else to do folks would swap the sawmill. A Mr. Peters from Colchester bought and rebuilt it, and in due time traded it off and left town.

At last it fell into the hands of George Phillips and in 1862 was torn down and the privilege reverted back.

The Walbridge mill on Brewster river, near the east church, (now a community house) on the road to Smugglers Notch, is another sawmill of a very early date. After changing owners several times it come into the hands of Eben Field, from west Bolton. He put in a circular saw, and a little later sold it to a Mr. Lamplough who added a cider mill, clapboard, lathe and a gristmill. After his death it came into the hands of Frank Edwards.

Several other mills were built along the river and later town down. In 1820 Isaac Griswold built a gristmill at the upper end of Jeffersonville. This after many changes and many owners passed into the hands of Joel Wilcox and was in use until about the time of the World War.

In 1817 Thomas H. Perkins bought a privilege, built a shop and made axes and scythes. He was succeeded by W. Lathrop, who made axes and wagons. There have been other mills, a carding and fulling mill, a place where they made potato whiskey, and then for many years a starch factory, in that village.

Two other sawmills were built on the creek in North Cambridge, one with an "up and down" saw. So sawmill-minded did these folks become, that small children built dams across the roadside ditches, with water wheels that turned briskly when they "histed the gate."

Other settlers came from time to time, and in 1791 the town had a population of 359.



On September 22, 2019 a few CHS members joined Sally Laughlin to explore a **Mysterious Rock Carving in Cambridge**. As best we could determine, the carving reads as follows:

W T JARVIS
HUNTINGTON
WEST VA
AUG 27
1882

Who was W T Jarvis? What is the significance of the reference to Huntington, West VA? (There is such a place, located on the Ohio River). Why did Jarvis (or someone) expend considerable time and energy carving this information onto a ledge outcropping in a field. Was W T Jarvis buried nearby? Did Jarvis live there? Just passing through with nothing better to do? The initial search of records revealed no mention of W T Jarvis. The carving is worn and difficult to make out, so it is possible we did not get the letters exactly right. The mystery continues. More research is needed. Who would like to dig into this and solve it?



Upcoming Events



November 13th 7:00 pm
Warner Lodge

Cambridge Historical Society Annual Meeting

Would you like to know what CHS has been doing this year? Would you like to help develop programs for next year? Do you want input into the Officers and Directors of the Society? If so, plan on attending the Annual Meeting. The meeting includes reports from the Officers and Committees, election of Officers, and discussion of upcoming events and programs. This is your society so plan on participating in this important event.

December 11th 6:00 pm
Warner Lodge

Annual Christmas Meeting

Every year the CHS holds a Christmas meeting with a Christmas quiz, Yankee Swap, and great refreshments (and spiked eggnog, but don't tell anyone). For the past few years it has been sparsely attended, but the more people, the more fun. Come and bring a gift to share (don't spend more than \$10) and your favorite holiday nibbles and join us for this really fun event. Note the earlier starting time.



Cambridge Historical Society
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Volunteers Needed

The Cambridge Historical Society is in need of volunteers to help with documenting the materials that individuals and estates donate to the Society. The process is called accessioning and it fulfills the legal requirements for the Society to accept and display the documents, clothing, photographs, diaries and memory books that are donated. It is also an incredible learning experience about the Cambridge community and Cambridge history. During the past three years, the current group has documented over 2500 items. We work on Sunday mornings from 9AM-12N or whatever people may want to contribute of their time. Won't you please join us at the Society building on Sunday to help in this important task!

The Historical Society meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month from March through December at the Warner Lodge on School Street in Jeffersonville. A business meeting with the Board of Directors starts at 6:00 pm and the program starts at 7:00 pm.