

HARTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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SCHOOL CHOICE, SEMINARIES AND ACADEMYS

The education of our children after they complete the elementary grades continues to be the subject of much conversation. I have become interested in how this was handled in the Upper Valley from a number of angles. First of all, I have a grandchild who is a freshman at Thetford Academy. Because I also graduated from Thetford, and because we have rented a house in the town to avoid spending our lives on the road, I am cataloging the academies history while there. The first day that I reported for work, I found out that a man from Ohio was doing research on the academy as being a very early school to accept women into serious academic programs. I remembered that I had found at the Hartland Historical Society, letters written by Anna Cutts of Hartland who was a student during the 1850s. These were shared with the academy and with the researcher.

Further research has revealed to me the attendance of many Hartland youth in the early 19th century. Simeon Short was a Hartlander who moved to Thetford, was a judge, and was one of the men instrumental in founding the academy. Dartmouth College was nearby in Hanover and men in the area who wished to attend found that, in many cases, the local schools had not prepared them for entrance. After the War of 1812, good feelings and prosperity were abundant. Finally the country was finished with fighting and could begin the process of providing the good life for its citizens. Men went to college in the most part to become ministers. Others were lawyers and doctors. The West was opening up and the leaders of our religious institutions did not want the settlers

to have to depend on uneducated ministers. This area boasted many well educated men, and they began to talk about how to provide preparatory education for their children. There was much discussion about which side of the river to build a school and while this was under discussion a Mr. Kimball of Meriden offered land which could not be ignored. This settled it for a time, and Kimball Union Academy was opened in 1815. Men from Thetford including Judge Short and the Rev Asa Burton contributed their support to the founding. They were sending young men from Thetford and taking tuition money to Meriden when one day on the drive back, Judge Short said, "Enough. We need to have our own school in Thetford and keep our money in our town." The same cast got together and opened Thetford Academy in 1819. Now, the learned men who founded the academy had many daughters and felt that it was important that they receive education beyond graceful living so that they might be suitable companions for their husbands. Experiments had been done in other areas that proved that indeed, girls were capable of learning! That is why girls were admitted by 1822 and were never excluded. Elizabeth Bates from Hartland was in the first graduating class in 1852. Prior to then the school was running four terms a year and you went when you could. Tuition money and your responsibilities on the home farms might mean that you didn't go for consecutive terms. When the men had completed the required courses in Greek, Latin, European Literature (there wasn't any American) they could apply to Dartmouth, Harvard and a few others for admission.

College was not an option for the girls. The first girl to graduate from College in the United States was a Thetford girl who went to Oberlin which was founded by Thetford people. Mary Hosford graduated in 1841, but was not allowed to take part in the graduation exercises. This girl was a colleague of girls from Hartland. In looking through some early catalogs, I found many of the old Hartland names as students. Besides Bates and Cutts, there are Richardsons, LaBarrees and more. There was also the son of an Indian Chief, boys from Jamaica, Syria and Africa. Students came from many of the United States and from Canada. Harriet Beecher Stowe's son went there before he went to Dartmouth, before he drowned in the Connecticut River. Justin Morrill attended

for a short time. Did that exposure in some way contribute to Sen. Morrill starting the land grant colleges? At some points in time over 400 students were registered and a fund existed for those who could not pay the tuition.

Kimball Union Academy did of course, continue. We have an 1837 catalog and an 1856 graduation program in which all the speakers and performers are men. There is a list of the ladies also conferred diplomas. The home towns are listed but none from Hartland.

We have a long list of Hartland students who attended Green Mountain Perkins Academy in So. Woodstock during the years from 1848, the year of it's founding, to 1898. This list contains many females.

Mattie Sumner, daughter of David, attended Mrs. Hubbard's School for Girls in Hanover for a time. This school was located in the Hubbard's large house which stood on the site of the present administration building of Dartmouth College. Mattie attended classes in French, composition, book-keeping, algebra and bible lessons.

While attending Mrs. Hubbard's, Mattie wrote the following:

"Advantages of a good education

There is no doubt that everyone must have a good education in order to become an intelligent, useful and respected member of society but in what this education consists of, I cannot tell. Some persons would say in knowledge of music, drawing and the languages, others in knowledge of mathematics, Geography and History, both ancient and modern, with what I have before mentioned, music and drawing and then language. It is indispensable to one who expects to travel in any foreign country, to know the language of the country in which he is traveling and perhaps he may meet at home with people from other countries with whom he wishes to converse. Nor is this all. It is so pleasant to be able to read books in other languages, but if one should be acquainted with all the languages and not have enough knowledge of English it would not be of much use so having music and drawing are very pleasant; it is so cheerful in cold winter

evenings to have music, but this kind of an education is what I fear I shall never acquire. Mattie B. Sumner Hanover N.H. Sept. 13th”

This was maybe in 1854. By 1856, Mattie was at Miss Russell’s school in Greenfield, Mass.

There was a huge change in education in 1906 when the state ordered that all towns must provide a secondary education for their youth. Some of the academies and seminaries became completely public, some remained private with boarders, some private with day students only, and some closed. The ones that remained private, with the sending towns paying tuition have the advantage of not having to present a budget for the approval of the tax-payers. However, they do have to meet certain standards as set by the state.

Thanks to: Mary B. Slade,” Thetford Academy – The First One Hundred Years, 1819 – 1919”. Howland Atwood, “The Sumner Papers,” The Thetford Academy historical collection and the Hartland Historical Society collection

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

You don’t have to belong to the Brick Church in Hartland to appreciate the lovely stained glass windows. These windows replaced those of plain glass during a restoration in 1906. Perhaps you have wondered about the people whose names are displayed so proudly on each one. I have done some research on each section and will share these findings with you. We’ll start with the SE window at 11 o’clock as you face the altar.

1791 WEBSTER 1906

MR. AND MRS. MOSES WEBSTER

MR. AND MRS. JOHN WEBSTER

MR. AND MRS. AZRO N. WEBSTER

Moses Webster was born Jan. 20, 1755 in Chester N.H. and was a soldier in the Army of the Revolution, engaging in the Battle of Bunker Hill. He also served in

the Battle of Bennington and at wars end moved to Hartland and was granted two lots of wild land for his service in the Army. This farm was in the family for many years and descendants still live on Webster Rd. on land that was his. About 1780 he married Elizabeth Woods of Hartland. Their first child, born in 1781, was John who married Thankful Cheever, daughter of Rev. Samuel Cheever, a Congregational minister in Hartland. John and Thankful's fifth and youngest child was Azro Newell, born in 1824.

Moses came here in the late 1770s and in 1779, with other of the earliest founders like Eli Willard and Paul Spooner, helped to organize services with the Congregationalists, Methodists, Baptists and Universalists, all holding services together until they could build houses of their own.

In 1789, the Congregational Church became an independent body with a membership of 17 and called the Rev. Daniel Breck as pastor.

Towns were empowered to vote a tax to support a church. This was repealed in 1807, leaving each church to support itself.

Moses is buried in the Cutts Cemetery. He died Oct 11, 1844, aged 90 years. "REVOLUTIONARY WAR SOLDIER. THEY REST FROM THEIR LABORS AND THEIR WORKS FOLLOW THEM"

John who married Thankful Cheever died in 1856. Thankful was a descendant of Elizabeth Penn, aunt of William Penn of Pennsylvania

Azro died in 1870. He spent his life on the farm on Webster Rd. and married Mary Parsons from Ticonderoga, N. Y.

The Parsons highboy was passed on in the Webster family, eventually to Dora and Irving Shepard. Upon Dora's death it was sold and the proceeds used to finance the elevator in the Congregational Church. The highboy is now in the Martha Parsons House and Museum in Enfield, Conn. (I think it has gone home).

Carol Mowry, Editor

A note from Carol

We are very fortunate to have scheduled Gordon Tuthill to speak to our group and all other interested people at our annual meeting. This meeting will be in the Community Room at the Library at 2 P.M. on Sunday, May 16. Mr. Tuthill is a historian and surveyor and will address the history of the Vermont side of the Connecticut River as it became, New Hampshire, then New York and finally Vermont. This ties in beautifully with the up coming Upper Valley celebration to take place next summer as we recognize the birthday of becoming the New Hampshire Grants. There will be a very brief business meeting and election of officers.

As we think about the celebration next year I am happy to tell you that the Society Board has voted to sponsor a trip at some point in the summer to Portsmouth to visit the Wentworth- Coolidge House and two other houses that date from the time of Hartland's (it was Hertford then) beginnings.

You will notice that I have included the form for membership in this issue. Yes, It's that time again and we hope that everyone will " join up". Without your help, we would not be able to continue to offer programs or the newsletter. I am thanking you in advance. Along those lines, this newsletter is brought to you through a generous donation from Jay Boeri.

Others have also shown their generosity and we want to thank George and Nancy Smith for adding to our coffers. Also, from Darlene Royce we have Philip Royce's Fire Dept badge, an early picture of the Brother's farm and Three Corner School pictures, Louise Royce's bible, many copies of the "Heartland Voice," "Vermont, Our Own State," and the Royal typewriter used by Louise doing work for the town.

I had also failed to mention earlier that we have many, many pieces of crochet work done by Maud and Happy Brothers along with Hartland Fair prize ribbons

My sincere thanks to all... See you on the 16th.
