



GREENSBORO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

The Miracle of Water

The state-wide Tunbridge Vermont History Expo in June sponsored by the Vermont Historical Society featured many local historical societies, including ours, with exhibits on water and how it has affected the state's history. Greensboro's booth concentrated on the many mills in our town. This exhibit was brought back to town and expanded by showing the water distribution system in the Village, displays on mills, the businesses in town, the farms, and recreation such as boating, fishing, swimming and skiing – all of which are dependent on water. The exhibit was tied together by the use of scientific explanations of how the three phases of water- ice, liquid and vapor- are all present in our part of the planet and interact to determine our commercial and recreational history. The exhibit was curated by BJ Gray, Kyle Gray, Nancy Hill, Gina Jenkins, Erika Karp, Wendy Parrish and Wilhelmina Smith.



A Glimpse of the Water Exhibit at GHS Museum

Old China Hands

On Monday night, August 8, Fellowship Hall was transported to China between the World Wars, to the lives of the Greensboro *Old China Hands* who lived and worked there. Four Greensboro families with connections to the China of that era were represented: Winston-Hale-Bascom; Corbett-Irwin; Houghton-Freeman; and Allman-Burnham. Over ninety Greensboro Historical Society members and guests attended. One of the two surviving China Hands, Margaret Hale Bascom, was honored as the “Matriarch of the China Hands”.



Left to right: Moderator: Allen Davis, Panelists: Graeme Freeman; June Bascom; Neal Burnham; Eliza Burnham; Richard Allman, Tony Irwin

Fellowship Hall was converted to the China of that time by Michael Hoffman who projected photos of the families on large screens in the hall – with the effect of transporting us all to their houses, clubs, households and businesses, mostly in Shanghai and some in retreats in the mountains and seashore north of Beijing.

Three of the families, Hale, Freeman and Allman worked for the insurance company that is known today as American International Group (AIG). All the families had to eventually leave China when the Japanese invaded. Some were interned in Japanese camps. The fourth family, the Corbetts (Harriet Irwin), had been in China since the 1860's, the descendants of a missionary. They all knew each other in Shanghai. The families came to Greensboro at different times and renewed their friendships here.

They will work together to curate the GHS Exhibit about their families for the summer of 2017.

If you'd like to receive your newsletter by email, send your email address to secretary@greensborohistoricalsociety.org

President's Corner



Never a dull moment at GHS! Anyone who thinks that history is boring should have been around our society this summer. 400 visitors, including school children (yes, we counted!), enjoyed the

“Power of Water” exhibit that expanded the exhibition we took to the Vermont Historical Society Expo in Tunbridge in June.

Many folks braved a deluge rain one June evening to hear Tim Breen discuss the writing of his recent book: *“George Washington’s Journey”*; a large group gathered for Rick Yeiser’s morning seminar on “Caspian’s Feeder Streams”; and others heard Dorothy Penar speak on “Historic Preservation”. A crowd filled Fellowship Hall when the panel of “Old China Hands” descendants discussed their families at our annual meeting, in anticipation of the upcoming exhibit at GHS next summer. The traditional Ice Cream Social was nearly rained out, but it went on, delicious as usual, and in September many folks found their winter reading supply at the annual book sale at Janet Long’s Garage.

While some volunteers led events, others enjoyed being docents at the exhibit. Several writers, led by our talented editor, published the 41th annual volume of “The Hazen Road Dispatch”. Worker bees set up a new dehumidifier in the GHS archive room, added Marvelseal to the shelving to protect our archives; and added genealogical information and videos to the wonderful GHS Website and information to our new Facebook page. Still others provided answers to people with questions about Greensboro and its people.

Margaret Mead, (who visited Greensboro and wrote an article in our first Hazen Road

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Dispatch) once said, *“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world.”* The small groups of citizens who work in this town for the library, select board, planning commission, school boards, land trusts, churches, nursing home, 4Cs, Greensboro Association, music and theatre groups, our historical society and other organizations do change our world and do make a difference. Life in Greensboro is not boring as we all go about making history.

Nancy Hill
Co-President

Greensboro Car Talk

The annual GHS winter meeting on **Sunday, March 5, 2017 at 2 p.m.** (2 days before Town Meeting) at Fellowship Hall will feature the garages and vehicles of Greensboro. Tim Nisbet, a long-time owner of the Greensboro Garage, will speak about its history, and other folks associated with former garages, such as Emeric Tanguay’s in Greensboro Bend, will also speak. Tales will also be told of several antique cars that reside in town. Stay tuned for more details, mark your new calendar with the date, and bring your own car stories to share.



Lily Castle and her class from Lakeview spent an afternoon exploring the GHS museum. Here she chats with “Effie” in the Hill exhibit

Historic Greensboro Shawl

Fred B Wright of Minnetonka, MN, wrote the Greensboro Historical Society last August offering us a shawl, acquired from his mother. She had always displayed it on her baby grand piano when he was growing up.

A handwritten note, attached to the shawl, reads “This shawl was made by Mary E. Conant, Greensboro, Vermont some- time before 1850. Property of Mrs. F. B. Wright, 424 Newton Ave. N., Minneapolis.” The note was written by Mr. Wright’s grandmother, Helen Conant Wright, before she died in 1934. The note also gives the measurements of the triangular shawl: 88” for the base, and 47” for the height.

The shawl is of wool and the lining is linen, and is decorated with very fine needlepoint roses.

We can see from the dates that Mary E. Conant lived at least one generation before Mr. Wright’s grandmother, Helen Conant Wright. She was Helen’s aunt. Helen’s sister, Alice Tolman Conant married George Woodruff Simpson, in 1885, and one of their children was Mary Jean Simpson, who became Dean of Women at UVM and had a house in E. Craftsbury. The Greensboro History shows a boarding house near the present day Smirkus Camp in Greensboro run by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Conant, Helen’s brother and uncle of Mary Jean Simpson.



Mary Conant’s Shawl
Given to GHS

Caspian Streams

On July 12 Rick Yeiser, a Greensboro Land Trust trustee, gave an illustrated talk in the Society’s building about a study he conducted in 2013 regarding Caspian Lake’s feeder streams. The main streams are Porter, Tate and Cemetery Brooks, but several smaller brooks, some seasonal, also feed the lake.



Rick noted that the streams, as the lake’s main source, play a vital role in its quality and ecology, and provide spawning habitat for many of the lake’s fish species. He described the feeder streams as healthy, with the exception that erosion and sedimentation are creating expanding deltas and contributing to unwanted nutrient loading in the lake (see photo). Sand, dirt and gravel washing down from the town’s dirt roads are a major contributing factor, but lack of landowner oversight and new residential development add to the problem.

Greensboro Historical Society’s FaceBook Page Update

Our FaceBook now has 96 “likes”! When someone “likes” our page on FB, they automatically are apprised of all new content, including pictures, upcoming events, and videos of previous events. Speaking of, our FB page has received 83 views of the “Old China Hands Panel Discussion” video! The GHS FB page also receives messages and submissions. Recently, UVM Professor Adrian J. Ivakhiv submitted via FB a blog post about the great philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead’s time in Greensboro. Turns out, Whitehead resided on the shores of Caspian Lake while he wrote his philosophical magnum opus, *Process and Reality*. The blog post, and more, can be found at our FB page, www.facebook.com/GHSVT. Please visit, “like,” and share the page with friends!

“Forest of Art” - The Story of the Red Pine Forest

In the 1950’s the Vermont soil bank continued the earlier CCC work of planting red pines on fallow farm land to increase biomass and provide a harvest down the road. Thousands of acres were planted in Vermont, including the abandoned farm fields at the Highland Lodge.

David and Carol Smith enlisted the slave labor of their children and nieces to plant a 3-acre plot behind the Lodge in 1956. The work was hot – putting seedlings in a groove made by a machine pulled behind a tractor. But it was worth the effort—the trees lived up to their promise, growing fast and reclaiming the land and providing a magic place.

Many of the pines had nailed-in boards with art work created by the uncounted children who had stayed at the Lodge – making a “Forest of Art”, magical to walk through and a source of memories and awe. There were trails for walking and skiing called “Wrong Way” and “Mistake” adding a frisson of excitement to any venture into the woods. The woods were dark but magical with an aura of “Hansel and Gretel”.

Many times over the years the advice to “thin” the trees went unheeded. Who would want to change perfection? Then, in January, 2014, the tall, spindly, trees with shallow roots, growing too close together paid the price. A snow storm followed by an ice storm weighed down the tops causing the trees to fall over, tearing the shallow roots out of the ground, snapping the trunks in the middle and bending the trees down.

Slowly, over a two-year period Mark Molleur and his dad, Gilles, began to cut down the trees. After the slash has been cleaned up, there will, again, be a field – more fertile than the one that was planted

GHS Newsletter

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Forest of Art at Highland Lodge

(Peek between the trees)