

CAMBRIDGE HARKENER

CELEBRATING THE HERITAGE OF CAMBRIDGE, VERMONT

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President's Review - 2023

2023 has been a busy year for the Cambridge Historical Society (CHS). We presented seven programs, published several issues of the Harkener, dealt with a flood, accomplished several building projects, and made progress towards technology upgrades. Here are the details.

The seven programs covered a wide range of topics. Many were recorded and can be viewed on Facebook through a link on the CHS website (www.cambridgehistoricalsociety.org). The programs were:

- March: *The Morse/Mann Mansion, part 1*, featuring Dr. Mann's daughter Kristin Wells;
- May: *The Morse/Mann Mansion, part 2*, also featuring Kristin Wells;
- June: Howard Coffin, *Vermont Sharpshooters in the Civil War*;
- July: Reg Wilcox, *History of Cambridge High School*;
- August: Rebecca Rupp, *Soup to Nuts, the History of Food*;
- September: Jen Bartleau, *Puritan Gravestones*;
- October: Jenny Fulton & Steven Engelhart *Cambridge Village National Register Nomination*.

Several issues of our newsletter *The Harkener* were published and distributed to members. Production of the *Harkener* is mostly due to the talent and efforts of Geana Little. Thanks Geana! Each issue contains a number of interesting articles, and is a valuable benefit for members.

The July 11 Flood left about 18 inches of water in the basement of the Warner Lodge. This necessitated pumping the water out, and emptying the basement of all contents. (Fortunately, items from our collection were removed just before the basement filled). The basement bathroom fixtures had to be removed and all lines capped off. All insulation, paneling and sheetrock had to be removed and disposed of. After the basement was dried out (dehumidifiers and fans) new insulation had to be installed. Dealing with the flood damage was a huge effort that involved dozens of volunteers and hundreds of hours of labor. Thanks to our prompt response and all the hard work, the basement is in good condition again, and we appear to have avoided mold and mildew issues in the building.

Also during the summer, several volunteers scraped and painted the CHS barn that is at the rear of the former Sweet property. The barn was looking pretty rough, but now looks good and is well protected from the weather. The barn is a valuable asset to CHS, as we store a quantity of antique farming equipment inside.

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 Nineteen

Looking back to the achievements of the first settlers we sometimes wonder if improvements are an unmixed blessing, or if young folks are lacking in the moral fiber of their ancestors.

In 1849 Martin Ellsworth bought a piece of land in Pleasant Valley, and with his young wife, Amelia Chapman, began housekeeping in a scantily furnished cabin. Their live stock consisted of one heifer and a pig. There was no hay on this land, so the first winter the heifer was fed on "browse" - the tender branches of trees and

to her other work. Girls used to knit on their way to and from school and proudly finished a sock a day besides getting their lessons. There were no drones in the hive in those days.

Martin Ellsworth was the son of Aaron Ellsworth who had a family of twenty-four children who grew up into useful citizens. He was twice married. And how many think it quite an undertaking to bring up two children properly.

Henry Stowell, Sr., was born in Mansfield, Conn., in 1798. He entered Middlebury College in 1812 at the age of fourteen and graduated in 1816. He came to Cambridge in 1820 and opened a law

office where he practiced law for fifty two years. He died in 1872.

His son, Henry Stowell Jr., studied law with his father. It is said he was deeply in love with a beautiful girl but "faint heart never won fair lady," and a bolder lover married her. That disappointment killed all of Henry's ambition. He never practiced, in fact, he never did anything more. After his father's death he stayed in the old home looking



bushes. The next year he bought another heifer, a young colt and a few hens, paying for them by working for the other farmers. Enough land had been cleared so that he sowed some oats, planted some potatoes and raised a few vegetables. Working together, true partners in everything, by the time they reached middle life they had a fertile farm and a beautiful home. One article of the bride's "setting out" was a beautiful bureau which she bought and paid for herself by knitting forty pairs of "sale socks" from wool given her by her parents, and sold for a shilling a pair. Knitting sale socks for the local stores was one of the few ways in which a woman could earn a little money. An expert knitter could knit a sock a day in addition

carefully after his property and living a quiet, studious life among his well chosen books in the little law office with a dog for his constant companion. He never could be induced to ride in a train and it is doubtful if he ever left town.

The day of his funeral the house-keeper tried to shut Jack up till after the service, but with the mysterious instinct animals have, and few humans believe in, Jack knew that his loved master was going away, and made a frantic resistance. A neighbour took him home with him but Jack escaped, and when the funeral procession reached the top of the hill at Mountain View, there was Jack waiting by his master's open grave.

Continued from Page 1

This summer Shirley Opstrup repainted the Warner Lodge porch floor, and this fall several volunteers rebuilt the ramp that provides handicap access to the Warner Lodge.

The final building item to mention is the oil tank. The old tank had seen decades of service, and had reached a condition where fuel dealers would not deliver fuel to it. On November 22 we had a new tank installed at a cost of about \$2,800.

As you can see, the CHS property does not take care of itself, it requires a lot of work and money! In addition to the hundreds of hours of volunteer labor, we spent about \$1,500 on paint, insulation and lumber, and we need to cover the \$2,800 cost of the fuel tank. Donations are always welcome!

Moving on to technology, the CHS Technology Committee has been meeting to prioritize and implement tech upgrades. We are in the process of hiring a consultant to guide us through this process. The consultant will be paid with a \$2,000 ARPA grant we received from the Town of Cambridge. We also received a generous \$500 donation from the Eagles which we will put toward tech upgrades (such as better lighting and sound for our programs). We will keep you informed about progress on the tech front.

Throughout the year the Collections Committee has continued to plug away at digitizing and cataloging all the items in our collection. There is still a lot more to do! Sometimes it seems that new items come in faster than the old items can be processed.

The Finance Committee met periodically to discuss our budget and review our finances. We have an investment account that, (depending on the market), provides a modest income stream. Presently, our income from dues, donations, book and pie sales does not come close to covering expenses, so we will be relying on some of that investment income to make up the difference.

Regarding membership, we have about 90 memberships (130 names), of which the majority are long-standing life memberships (which pay no annual dues). Fortunately, many life members make donations *in lieu* of dues. Income from membership is less than \$1,000.



CHS continues to collaborate with other groups to enhance our community. We ran a booth selling books at the Congregational Church yard sale on Memorial Day, assisted Cambridge Rotary with their July 4th activities, participated in the Cambridge History Walk in October, and helped the Cambridge Arts Council present a "Halloween Photo Booth" at the Warner Lodge on Halloween (some participants can be seen in the photo to the left). Volunteers also assist Cambridge Elementary School with their local history program.

I am very proud of what CHS has accomplished this year, and I am very optimistic about our future. The work of volunteers has been astonishing, and the projects we accomplished were impressive. My thanks to the volunteers, Board, Officers and members who have worked so hard to accomplish so much!

Joel Page
President, Cambridge Historical Society

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 \$20.00

Family \$30.00

Business \$30.00

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



As Joel has said, we had an interesting year. We're planning more programs for 2024. Reg Wilcox will be back to present a program on Cambridge High sports and Rebecca Rupp will return to discuss the history of alcoholic beverages. Ron Carter has promised to do a program for us and we have several oral histories that are ready to be shown.

Currently, we are planning our annual Holiday Party on Saturday December 2nd at 6:00 pm and all are welcome. Each person should bring a gift (\$10 or less) for the Yankee Swap and some food to share. We hope to see you at the Warner Lodge on the 2nd.

Joel also mentioned our unexpected expenses this year.

Please consider an end of year donation to CHS.

Donations can be sent to:
Cambridge Historical Society
PO Box 16
Jeffersonville VT 05464-0016

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