



Times Past

Shrewsbury Historical Society
Newsletter

A Sign of the Past



Finney's Tavern & H.H. Finney's

Captain Nathan Finney operated his first tavern on the old turnpike up a hill by a railroad right of way in Cuttingsville in 1792. In 1806, the course of the turnpike was changed to what is now Route 103. When Captain Finney died in the 1813 epidemic, records showed he purchased what was to become the second tavern on the new turnpike, Route 103.

Mrs. Lydia Meech, daughter of Captain Nathan Finney wrote the following in the *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*: "I was married at this time and lived in Glens Falls, N.Y. Father died of the epidemic March 29, 1813. It was the time of the breaking up of the ice. We went, my husband and I, in a gig, and men came out at Castleton to help us ford the stream. When we arrived it was a terrible time in Shrewsbury; many heads of families had died, all of the town was in sorrow. How we sat down and talked about it and wept; the frightful disease smote not only in Vermont but in New York State also. The heads of a family just below us at Glens Falls both died of it. Dr. Holton, who had married my sister, for six weeks slept only in his armchair. He kept several horses and always one harnessed. He at length took it. His wife wanted to send to Wallingford for Dr. Fox. 'No,' said he, 'I know all about the disease; it will do no good.' She sent for

Dr. Porter of Rutland, but he lived but a day and a half after he was taken."

After Captain Finney died, his sons Alvin and Levi took over the operation. Alvin died in 1821 and Levi carried on alone. Under Levi's proprietorship the tavern was in its heyday. When herds of livestock were being driven to Boston markets, the drovers stayed at the tavern and the nearby fields were crowded with their animals.

This second tavern was probably much larger than the present house is now (which is located on Route 103 traveling north past the bridge by Spring Lake Road, the first residence on the right, former home of Don Kelley and Shirley Kelley, once Postmaster of Cuttingsville). Besides the tavern that had a sign featuring a compass and a square, there was a livery stable with a capacity for 100 horses, a blacksmith shop and a store which opened in 1817.

Mr. L. Dawley, a resident of Cuttingsville, wrote the following which appeared in the *Vermont Tribune*. "There is probably no place in town where so much convivial enjoyment has been indulged in as at what was known as the old Finney Tavern. We remember over half a century ago the sign with the square and compass and other emblematical designs glittering in

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President's Note

As another year has ended for the SHS, I look back upon the things that have been accomplished during 2008. Everything is done because someone cares about our organization.

I would like to thank the Museum Committee for an excellent job of organizing the storeroom and archivally packing nine vintage quilts. The Fund Raising Committee has prepared the Memories 2009 calendar, which are almost sold out. The House Committee had the roof shingles repaired during the summer and plans are underway to repair the front steps with red cedar wood this spring. A ceiling leak in the museum will also be repainted.

At our September meeting, Nancy Bell gave an interesting presentation on bears. This event was well attended by members and guests. The program was videotaped by Con Winkler and is available at the museum.

As my term as president is about to end, I wish to thank everyone for all that they do for the SHS. It takes a team of many to carry out the responsibilities of an organization. I have had great support from my fellow officers and all committee members. Without you all, my job would have been hard and tedious. Your duties have not gone unnoticed.

Thank you.

Marguerite Ponton

Officers and Trustees

2008

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www.shrewsburyhistoricalsociety.com

Shrewsbury Historical Society, Inc.

(An all-volunteer non-profit organization)

5419 Route 103

Cuttingsville, Vermont 05738

HURRICANE of 1938



It has been seventy years since the devastating storm of September 21, 1938. Just prior to the storm, New England's streams had banks full to flood stage due to four days of steady rain.

The photo shows the village of Cuttingsville the day after the storm. Looking north from the iron bridge that once stood fording Mill River, on the left is a general store believed to have been owned by Etta Ridlon, and on the right, the John C. Stewart Ford Agency. Parts of Route 103 were destroyed.

Photo courtesy Sadie Ridlon Hamilton.

SHREWSBURY CHARTER

On September 4, 1761, Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire, under George III, granted the 24,000 acre tract of Shrewsbury to Samuel Ashley and 63 associates. The origin of Shrewsbury's name is unknown. However, since Wentworth had a wide circle of friends in England, many of his grants were named for them.

In Memoriam

Anne G. Haley, our Town Clerk and a dear friend of the Historical Society, passed away suddenly on Monday, July 14, 2008. Anne was an Assistant Town Clerk from 1988 and in 1999 until July of 2008, became our Town Clerk. Anne's help, energy, time and effort over these many years will never be forgotten.

Joanne S. Smith passed away on Tuesday, September 9, 2008. The Historical Society is indebted to Joanne for her many donations of artifacts, historical data and photographs through the years.

19th Century Artist John George Brown's Stay at Union House

Although few people outside of collectors and art historians know his name today, John George Brown was one of the most popular American artists of the late 19th century. His earlier paintings of the 1860's portrayed children of the city and country. Later, he enjoyed portraying country scenes showing older people as evidenced by the three shown in the Shrewsbury Historical Society museum.

Born in England in 1831, the artist moved to the United States in 1853. By the time he died in 1913, he must have painted about 1000 pictures.

In the years 1899-1900, the celebrated painter of genre scenes in America came to Cuttingsville in the summer to paint several scenes of rural Vermont life.

Brown would stay at the Union House (now site of John C. Stewart Ford Agency) and then set the scene for some of his paintings in a barn across the way. He used folks who lived in the area, among them, Peter Lovejoy, John Smalley and Mrs. Boutwell



The Quilter

Brown's print of Mrs. Boutwell shows her at her quilting frame. A widow, she made and sold quilts to the guests who came to Cuttingsville on the train and stayed at the Union House. Mrs. Boutwell lived above the horse sheds which formerly extended east from the Brick Store (currently Al Ridlon, Builder's office) in Cuttingsville. The print was given to the SHS by Mrs. Helen Foster Cook, whose father once owned the Brick Store. Mr. Brown gave this print to Mr. Foster.

Nancy Bell Talks on Bears

On September 2nd, Shrewsbury's own Nancy Bell presented a program attended by members and friends. Nancy has spent over 25 years for the conservation of wildlife habitat, particularly the protection of the black bear. As Vermont Director of the Conservation Fund, and Field Director since 1995, she has built unique partnerships with communities, businesses, non-profit organizations, state and federal agencies to conserve almost a half million acres of land in four states.

Nancy just completed the Green Mountain Bear Corridor with multiple partners, a 14 year, 21,000 acre, 28 parcel project that links the northern and southern unit of the Green Mountain National Forest

With a bearskin stretched on a long table as a background, Nancy showed many beautiful slides of bear habitat with interesting narration



Cornered

Brown painted *Cornered* "from life" in a barn opposite the Union House. Peter Lovejoy and John Smalley were both former wood choppers. Brown said that Lovejoy wore that "sweet and confident smile characteristic of all winners" and that Smalley was a "great character . . . a pensioner of the civil war" and "one of the happiest men I ever saw". Brown had such confidence in the country people that he left *Cornered* in the barn until it was completely finished, at which time he let all the villagers see it so they would know that "they are not being caricatured [sic] so they feel proud of being painted by an artist who makes them look just as they are." The third person in the painting is unknown.

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Gifts to SHS, 2008

Barbara & Russ Spies, Bennington, VT: Four posters depicting past Shrewsbury events.

Anne F. Spencer, Shrewsbury: Book, "The Vegetable World" stamped Julius Wooster Eggleston. Dr. Eggleston was a geologist who lived on the Shunpike in house later owned by George and Frances Brigham. Five books from Dick Johnson's Shrewsbury gardens library. Book, "The Battered Stars" by Howard Coffin. Collection of early Shrewsbury manuscripts. Also, nine early quilts and two rag rugs.

Jonathan & Eliza Mabry Gibson, Shrewsbury: "Shrewsbury Nursery School" sign found in former school, Northam.

Ahmet Baycu, Shrewsbury: A photo of the Nims family, and a Boston Globe article dated Nov., 1907 re: John George Brown, artist, and his subjects Peter Lovejoy and John Smalley depicted in painting "The Checker Players," also known as "Cornered".

Donald Oresman, N.Y., N.Y.: Annual pamphlet, "I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library."

Marguerite Ponton, Shrewsbury: Pair of leather baby shoes w/braces and photo of Willard Sanderson in wheel chair.

Edward J. & Irene Cook, Rutland, VT: Sign, "Travelers Home" that once hung on Cook's former home in Cuttingsville in the mid 1800's.

Anne F. Spencer, Shrewsbury: Cassette by Dorothy "Dino" Rice, Rounds, Rhymes and Silly Songs.

Edith Fee Kelley, Rutland, VT: Photo "Sunday School Group" Northam Church; Pass for cast and technicians for "Wide, Wide World" March 31, 1957; Graduation exercises booklet, 1939 Shrewsbury Schools; program for graduation 1935 (Shrewsbury Schools); Christian Church (Northam) 100th anniversary 1923; Christian Church (Northam) 150th anniversary 1973.

Ann Vanneman for family of Ted Hinckley, Shrewsbury: Household articles, farming tools, clothing, and rugs made from worn clothing saved for itinerant weavers who wove the pieces into rugs and runners.

Donald Oresman, N.Y., N.Y.: Booklet, "A Badly Burned Offering".

1970 TOWN OFFICERS



Handcrafted by Doris Erb, the shadow box above depicts the 1970 town officers on Town Meeting Day. They are: Town Clerk, Sadie R. Hamilton; Constable, Daniel Korngiebel; Moderator, Arthur E. Patten; and Selectmen Edgar Ridlon, Fordyce Sanderson and Clayton J. Stewart.

On the walls of the shadow box is a miniature Honor Roll of WW II Shrewsbury Veterans, along with American and Vermont flags, and a map of the town of Shrewsbury. On the speakers' table is a miniature ballot box, check list, notebook for minutes, two books on Vermont Statutes, a mug of coffee, and a gavel in the hand of the Moderator.

Revolutionary War Canteen



A gift of Edna Earl Noyes Martyn, the canteen belonged to Abram (or Abraham) Eaton, born Jan. 1, 1755 in Reading, MA. Married Mary Barrett (or Butler) Feb. 5, 1782. Died May 20, 1842 in Shrewsbury, VT. Their daughter, Polly, married Nathaniel Russell. Their son, Isaiah, married Naomi Pierce. Their daughter, Sarah Angelia, married Stephen Gleason Parker. Their daughter, Mary, married Herbert S. Martyn. Their son, Stephen, married Edna Earl Noyes.

ARTIST BROWN from Page Three

Even Mr. Smalley had something to say about *Cornered*. As Brown was completing the picture, the venerable wood chopper was somewhat troubled by what he saw, informing the artist that it was a "very good picture" but "it is not true to life, for Mr. Brown by gosh sir, Peter sir, never beat me in a game of checkers in his life sir!"



Her Past Record

The painting *Her Past Record* refers to the mare's record as a trotter or pacer, for in the late 19th and early

20th century, trotters and pacers were very popular in Shrewsbury and races were held on dirt roads and on the ice of Spring Lake in the winter. Again Brown used both Peter Lovejoy and John Smalley.

The Shrewsbury Historical Society is fortunate to have as curator Nancy Spencer, who studied 19th and 20th century American art. Nancy researched and contacted museums and art galleries to organize the Historical Society museum's center exhibit which featured these prints of the artist's paintings this summer. The prints will be displayed permanently in the museum.

Information on the artist and print of "Cornered" by Spanierman Gallery, LLC, N.Y.C. and for "Her Past Record" by Williams College Museum of Art, owners of the paintings.

Historical Society website

Even though it is winter, and the museum is closed until next July, you can enjoy a virtual museum tour if you click on www.shrewsburyhistoricalsociety.com. The site was designed and is managed by Ahmet Baycu of Shrewsbury. Besides the tour, you can click on panoramas and maps, houses, postcard slide shows, Marjorie Pierce's albums, Robert Frost's 1957 visit to Shrewsbury, and two of SHS past Newsletters.

SHREWSBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S 2009 Annual Dues Request

Your support helps keep the museum viable, interesting and accessible. Your dues and donations will not only be used for the upkeep and care of the museum building, but will also help in the preservation of our town's history for future generations. Thank you for your support.

2009 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Please fill out this form and mail it with your check payable to the Shrewsbury Historical Society, Inc., c/o John Elwert, 499 Shunpike Rd., Cuttingsville, VT 05738.

Name _____

Individual \$ 10

Family \$ 15

Contributing \$ 30

Address _____

Life (Individual/Couple) \$125

Donation \$ _____

Dues and donations are tax deductible.

History book, "Shrewsbury, VT - Our Town As It Was" by Dawn Hance, 322 pp Soft cover @ \$25 (\$20 for members) may be purchased at the Town Clerks office or by mail with an additional \$5 for postage.

FINNEY SIGN from Page One

the sunshine of this ancient hostelry. The place was known from the Canadian provinces to Boston, and was a home for the weary traveler, and a resort for pleasure seekers and invalids in search of health. Proprietor Finney was far above the mediocrity of men, affable, jovial, of fine physique, a man of full habits and liberal indulgences, which called around him a large circle of friends. Two or three four-horse coaches called daily at the door, the stables afforded room for at least one hundred horses, and were often filled. Immense droves of cattle were driven over the road from Northern New York and the lake towns to Boston markets, and, stopping overnight at this old stand, would literally cover the meadows and hillsides with lowing herds. But those good old times are gone. Mails, passengers, freights and livestock are now rushed by like the wind by steam. The old inn has been demolished (at least portions of it) and a commodious farmhouse stands in its place. The worshipers of Bacchus no longer assemble there, the jovial song and the merry raps of the toddy stick are heard no more. This valuable old farm is now owned by Amos Pratt, Esq., purchased by him at \$14,000, the highest price ever paid for a farm in town."

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In December of 1814, a *Rutland Herald* advertisement announced the opening of Levi Finney and his brother-in-law Hannibal Hodges' store located on the turnpike (Route 103) near Finney's tavern. Their merchandise featured a long list of East Indian and European goods including the following cloths: "Broadcloths, Cassimeres (a thin, twilled, woolen cloth), Sarcinettes (a soft silk cloth used for ribbons), Cambricks (a fine white linen cloth), Muzling (a fine, thin cotton cloth of plain weave often dyed and printed; also used for bedding) and Bombazetts (a thin woolen cloth, plain or twilled)". Also, "Shawls, Rum, Tea, Tobacco, Pepper, Spice, and Ginger."

When Levi Finney died in 1847, the property passed to his son, Hannibal Hodges Finney. Later, the farm went to Levi's daughter, Caroline, and her husband, William H. H. Barker.

Information for this story was found in "Shrewsbury, Vermont— Our Town As It Was" by Dawn D. Hance, and from the "History of Rutland County, VT".

The sign, "H. H. Finney" (the letter "Y" is missing) was found buried on the Finney property by George Brigham, Jr., who donated it to the Society's museum where it now hangs.