



TOWNSHEND HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

N E W S L E T T E R

SPRING 2002

PO Box 202 Townshend, VT 05353

VOLUME THREE • NUMBER TWO

CAROLE O'CONNELL SPEAKS AT THE TOWNSHEND LIBRARY ON VERMONTERS WHO GO WEST

Descendants of three pioneer Townshend families followed the western trails to New York and ultimately to California. Carole O'Connell will tell their stories and follow their journeys through genealogical methods, including journals, birth and death records and other sources. She may even find a black sheep in the family.

Carole will speak at the Townshend Library at 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 8th. Her focus is on descendants of John Hazeltine, Josiah Fish, and Samuel Fletcher. Carole lives in Sacramento, California, and is coming to Townshend after speaking in Saratoga, New York.

All interested persons are welcome to come to this informal and informative gathering.

ANNUAL MEETING IS JULY 11, 2002

Townshend Historical Society will begin its fourth year in July, and a musical treat is planned. Chester resident Eric Bye will present a program of 19th-Century American Popular Music. Included are war songs, religious songs, work songs, slave tunes, and songs for entertainment. Bye plays old-time banjo. This program is made possible by The Vermont Council for the Humanities.

Annual business meeting with election of officers and committee reports will precede the entertainment.

Place: Townshend Town Hall, Time: 7:30 P.M.

Please plan to come and enjoy a great evening.

LAUNDRY HINT

A wineglass of strong borax water in a pint of raw starch will make collars and cuffs stiff and glossy. (Circa 1900)

BOOK COMMITTEE NEEDS YOUR HELP

Although much of the research has been completed, the Book Committee urgently needs material on:

- (1) Depression years in Townshend – letters, memories, photos.
- (2) Government programs during that period in Townshend or nearby towns.
- (3) Grange activities – particularly in need of photos and other documentation
- (4) The Townshend Fair, held on the ballfield during the 1940s – photos and recollections.

Time is running out. If you can help us with any of these features, please respond at once. Call Marge Holt or Virginia Chamberlin without delay. Thank you.

THE TREASURY NEEDS MONEY FOR OPERATING EXPENSES - PLEASE SEND DUES

In order not to dip into our publication funds, we need to collect members' dues. Attached herewith is an individual bill from the treasurer. If you are already a member, please send a check to PO Box 202, Townshend, VT 05353.

If you would like to join, and we would love to have your support, please fill in the form attached herewith. New members are the lifeblood of any society. The community has given generously to the book fund. By becoming members you will insure that we move forward on all fronts. You will receive our newsletters and invitations to special events.

The price is right:

- Single membership - \$5.00
- Family membership - \$10.00
- Patron - \$100
- Student - \$2.00

Donations over the dues amount are welcome, and may be tax deductible under IRS regulations.

THE PROPRIETORS

... The first meeting of the Townshend proprietors took place on July 24, 1753 at Worcester, Massachusetts, an area where most of the men then lived. Who were the Townshend proprietors? Of the sixty-nine names on the charter we recognize today six or eight as actual settlers in the town. Most of the others, we can guess, never so much as saw Townshend or took any interest in its affairs. It was common in the New Hampshire Grants for original proprietors to sell their shares to others, who might sell them again, giving rise to a kind of speculative market in wilderness real estate.

That process got going immediately in Townshend, through the machinations of John Hazeltine, designated in the charter as town moderator. At the time of the Townshend grant, Hazeltine was fifty-one years old and living in Sutton, Massachusetts, where he was a leading citizen. Known as Colonel Hazeltine from his military service during the French and Indian Wars, he was a land speculator and all-around entrepreneur.

Col. Hazeltine evidently was charged with naming the actual grantees or proprietors who were to appear on the Townshend charter. He proceeded in a way that was, probably, quite legal, but was certainly less than innocent.

HANKY-PANKY

According to James H. Phelps's history, titled *Collections Relating to the History and Inhabitants of the Towns of Townshend, Vermont*, published in Brattleboro in 1877:

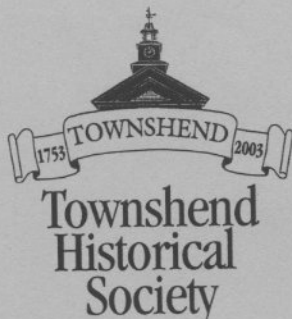
"The first settlers used to relate that he [Hazeltine] had names of his neighbors and acquaintances entered as grantees on back of the charter without their knowledge; that soon after the town was granted, he went round and called upon these unadvised proprietors, saying to each, after ingeniously breaking the ice, 'What shall I give you for a quit-claim of your right in Townshend?' The invariable reply was, 'I don't know as I have got any right, or interest, there.' This answer brought out the inquiry, 'What is it worth to you, then, and what will you take for it?' The satisfactory reply was, 'Oh, give us a mug of tod, and I will deed you all the right I have to anything up there.' The liquor would soon be furnished, and under its inspiration a deed would be executed."

The Phelps history goes on to say that within nine months from the date of the Townshend charter, a quarter of the land in the town was owned by Col. Hazeltine, who bought out the proprietors for a shilling a share—"about the sum he would have paid for the toddy, had it been brought in when a deed of one of the rights was delivered to him."

FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED

At a meeting of the Townshend proprietors held in Sutton on May 25, 1761, it was also voted "That the man who first settled in said township take his choice of the lots already laid out..."

There is no real evidence that Col. Hazeltine—the moderator of that momentous meeting—was the author of the measure to give first choice of Townshend's lots to the first man to take them up, but we can guess the Colonel had a shrewd idea as to who that fortunate man might be. The tale of this race is now part of Townshend's mythology. (continued below)



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