

Townshend Historical Society ANNUAL MEETING



CCC Project at State Forest Road

VT CCC Camps: History, Memories & Legacy

A Talk by Marty Podskoch

**Sunday, November 6
3:00 pm at Town Hall**

All are invited to attend our brief Annual Meeting at 2:30, which will include a vote for Board Members. Next a talk will be given by Marty Podskoch, a retired teacher and author of 11 books. The subject of his next book is the Civilian Conservation Camps in VT. Please bring your photos and stories about VT CCC to share, or if unable to attend, please call/email Marty at 860-267-2442; podskoch@comcast.net.

Stone Arch Bridge Update: Save America's Treasures Grant

The Townshend Historical Society's congressionally-designated award of \$221,000 for the restoration of the West Townshend Stone Arch Bridge is being delivered in the form of a prestigious Save America's Treasures Grant from the Historic Preservation Fund. It will be administered by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior.

The grant will be matched 1:1 by the Historical Society and people of Townshend, providing a total of \$442,000 toward the now-estimated \$800,000 budget for the project. The local match includes gifts designated for the project through June 2021 plus all Town voted appropriations except the \$50,000 approved at Town Meeting in March 2022. Before the project can begin, just over \$300,000 more must be raised. Toward that goal, THS will apply for a 2024 Preservation Grant of \$20,000 from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation and solicit potential donors.

The Town of Townshend has given its official approval for the project in the form of a Letter of Consent issued by the Select Board to the National Park Service. In it, the Town has agreed to move forward with the project as proposed in the Save America's Treasures grant application and to sign an Easement with the Vermont Department of Historic Preservation to protect and maintain the restored bridge for at least 10 years after restoration is finished.

Project tasks include building a scaffolding structure to support the bridge; removing the parapets, road surface and infill from above the arch; rebuilding the side (spandrel) walls and knee walls and replacing infill; grading the roadway, adding drainage and a new road surface, placing curbing blocks along the road to the bridge, and installing appropriate guardrails (parapets). The project will be paid for by fundraising except for grading, drainage, new road surface and guard rails which will be covered by the Town of Townshend.

The restoration work needs to be completed all at once in an estimated three-month's time and is proposed to start in either spring 2024 or 2025. During the work period, the Back Windham Road will be closed to traffic.

—Lee Petty

The Deacon Isaac Fisher House

The house was built by Deacon Isaac Fisher (1766-1851) in the early 1800's. Isaac Fisher's father, Noah Fisher, was one of the original proprietors in the Acton/Townshend area around 1782.

Isaac was a deacon of the Baptist church in South Windham and married Hannah Cobb, daughter of Capt. Simeon Cobb who served in the American Revolution. By 1818 Isaac Fisher, worth \$146 on the Grand List, was the wealthiest man in the town of Acton. He acquired five surrounding tracts of land to create one very large farm. The deacon and his wife lived there until 1851 when they both died within two months of each other. "Industrious, prudent, candid, dignified, unflinching in the performance of his duty and his promise, [Isaac Fisher] was a thrifty farmer, an honest man, a respected and influential citizen," said historian James Phelps, in 1877.

Next on the property came Daniel Fisher (1806-1887), who was one of the five children of Deacon Isaac. Daniel married Lucretia Farwell, and their children included Julia Fisher who married her cousin Alfred Fisher whose family owned the next house to the south.



Florence (Burbee) & Fred Fisher

After Julia moved down to her husband's place, the Daniel Fisher residence went to her brother Fred Fisher and his wife, Florence Burbee, who was almost 20 years younger than Fred. When Fred and Florence moved down to the West Townshend Village in 1920, Keith and Beatrice Carlton purchased the house.

In 1943 Iva Gibbs and her new husband, Theron Fisher lived there for eight years until they needed a larger acreage to fulfill Theron's ambitions as a farmer. They

eventually settled in Grafton and had a large dairy farm with 175 cows. By 1953 Hattie and Leon Gibbs, parents of Iva, owned the house.



Dea. Isaac Fisher/Daniel & Lucretia Fisher Place

As we can see in this photo, the Fisher house was a substantial Cape, with extensive additions built off a gable end to connect the house with a barn and stables—the familiar construction of Vermont hill farmhouses of the era. While it looked prosperous enough, by the 1940s it was showing its age. During the 1950's, the 140-year-old house was unfortunately in such bad shape that it was taken down by Rooney Gibbs. Hattie and Leon Gibbs, his grandparents, subsequently sold the site to Donald and Peggy Antaya in the 1960's. After building a modern house and adding to the old orchard to the west of the original foundation, they built up the original well site as a memorial of the old Isaac Fisher Place.

This Fisher House was located near the top of Back Windham Road in the so-called Fisher Neighborhood, which at one point included at least four houses belonging to members of the Fisher family.



The Fisher Neighborhood c 1910

The Isaac Fisher, Jr. House

Just below the Deacon Isaac and Daniel Fisher place is another Fisher house (still extant) that was built around 1844 by Isaac Fisher, Jr, who was another son of the Deacon Isaac Fisher mentioned above.



**The Isaac Fisher, Jr. Place in 2014
--the "Lower Fisher House"**

Isaac Jr. married Caroline Danforth and had at least one son, Alfred Jerome Fisher, who married his cousin Julia (Fisher) Fisher and they remained in his family's house from 1869 and on at least into the 1880s.



Julia & Alfred Fisher

They had two children, Frank and Effie May, who lived together in their parents' house for about fifty years until 1934 when Effie, aged fifty-five, married Rev. Arthur Green, a Baptist minister who came from England. Frank later (1941) married Adelbert Chase's widow, Mildred (Dompier) Chase and moved up to the Del Chase house. Frank possibly continued to keep the home fields going for hay until near the time that he died in 1959.



Frank Fisher

Margaret (Chase) Woodruff's aunt bought the Frank Fisher house for Margaret and Stockton Woodruff to live in as newlyweds in 1941. They stayed on for perhaps 4-5 years before moving back to the area where Margaret had grown up --building a log house there on Windham Hill Road.

The Fisher property next went to the Kinkaid's of upstate New York, who named the house "Rocks and Rills," and kept it as a retreat for Methodist ministers. The farm included 246 acres and was eventually divided up between the Kinkaid nieces and nephews. Harold Spencer got the portion with the house; and the Spencer family still owns it. Recent owners have carried out extensive remodeling and improvement, removing the barn but keeping the look and the layout of the old farmhouse with its graceful and inviting side porch.

--Research by H. Clawson

Mystery Photo, c 1890: Who were these women and where was this house? Written on the back: "To Mary from Evelyn and Press."



If you have info, please call Charlie at 802 365-7037.



Charlie Marchant at Taft Cemetery, W. Townshend



P.O. Box 202, Townshend, VT 05353

A History of Townshend's Cemeteries

In previous newsletters, we have given the history of some of the larger cemeteries in town. For this installment we will cover two of the smaller ones.

Taft Cemetery

This is a small cemetery enclosed by a stone wall, off Gale Road and Gale Lane adjacent to the Yvonne Parma/Fred Zielke (formerly Eno; Robert Gale) property in West Townshend.. Burials here go back to March, 1808. A care fund for this cemetery was established by Josiah Taft on March 21, 1808 at the Jamaica Saving Bank. The fund and cemetery were managed up to 1925 by Dr. George Gale as Trustee. Records indicate that no one came forward to manage the account after Dr. Gale died, so the funds were turned over to the town in 1949. This account, like other small accounts was consolidated in the 1970's into the Townshend Cemetery Fund.

Scott Cemetery

This is a small unfenced cemetery near the discontinued "Snow Road" off Buck Hill Road (which leads directly out of the Scott Covered Bridge). There are 5 or 6 uncarved field stones under a very large oak tree. During the time that it was on Chamberlin property, it was maintained for many years by Park Chamberlin. Now that the cemetery is owned by the State of Vermont, it is being maintained by the Davison-Berger family. The Shepherd Scott family had lived on the hill above the cemetery around the 1850's. In addition, there used to be a cellar hole opposite the cemetery, but due to a logging operation the cellar hole was destroyed.

—Charlie Marchant

Please Renew Your Support: THS Membership for 2023

(Membership year runs January to December.)



Please mail your dues and updated info in the enclosed envelope or on-line at www.townshendvt.org using PayPal.

Please add your email if you'd like the online version; this will save postage.



Townshend Historical Society Board

President: Charles Marchant

Vice President: Robert DuGrenier

Treasurer: Helen Holt

Trustees: Heidi Clawson, Eileen Fahey, Lee Petty



Answer to last newsletter Mystery Photo:

It is thought that Miss Townshend is either Phoebe Cronin or Janis Chick.