

THE SCRIBBLER II

DECEMBER 2006

VOL 1, ISSUE 1

“The Scribbler” has a long-standing tradition in Cavendish, as Fannie Bacon and Carrie Spofford started it in September 1900. In tribute to these Cavendish women, *Scribbler II*, will now appear quarterly as the Cavendish Historical Society’s (CHS) newsletter.

With the holiday season well underway, we would like to take this opportunity to wish you a joyous holiday and the happiest of New Years.

We hope to see you at future events, and invite you to participate on one of our committees. You can sign up for them at the back of the newsletter.

CHS Board

Dan Churchill: President
Gloria Leven: Vice President/Secretary
Tim Jefferson: Treasurer
Sandra Sterns: Archivist/Curator
Seymour Leven, MD
Tom Sabo



Dear Santa:

It’s been a busy year for the Cavendish Historical Society. We’ve offered a variety of events, many of which have had record-breaking attendance. We heard from some of the elves they particularly liked the Cemetery Tour with Carmine Guica, the Phineas Cage presentation and the Pieter vanSchaik’s slide show and talk about Solzhenitsyn. Because October is the beginning of your busy months, we know that several of you weren’t able to

make Barbara Gay’s presentation. So you don’t feel like your missing out, we’ve included parts of her talk in this issue of the *Scribbler II*.

In the fall, three grades from Cavendish Town Elementary School (CTES) came to visit the Museum to learn more about the history of their town. Many of them were thrilled to see items that had been donated by their grandparents, and even great grandparents. In short, we’ve been good this year, so there is no need for coal or ashes in our stocking.

Santa, if you and your elves could help us with some of the following items, it would help us improve the programming we can offer, and to preserve our history

- A computer, printer and scanner; funds for internet access and a website
- Digital camera, video and audio tape equipment for recording
- Smoke Detectors
- Funds to help with the upkeep of the Museum and Programs for 2007

Just so the elves know, we are a 501 © 3 organization, so all of their donations are tax deductible. Further, if they would like to make a donation as a present, we will be sure to send a special card indicating the generous gift that was made in their name.

We know it’s a busy time for you, so just a reminder that the Historical Society has a number of wonderful items for sale including:

• “Cavendish Hillside Farms”
1939-1957 by Sandra Field Sterns Cost:
\$10, plus \$3 for shipping and handling;

• Cards and Envelopes by Craig
Rankin Drawings of various Cavendish
locations Cost \$3.50 per set of 8, plus \$1
for shipping and handling

Wishing you the best of holiday season,
The Cavendish Historical Society

Cavendish Update

Want to know more about what’s
happening in Cavendish? Subscribe to
the Cavendish Update, a free electronic
newsletter which not only lists the
various Society events, but let’s you
know what’s happening in town. To
subscribe, send an e-mail to
margoc@tds.net with “subscribe CU” in
the subject heading.



Excerpts from Gay’s Presentation

Barbara Gay, widow of Stearns Gay,
who was Vice President of the Gay
Brother’s Woolen Mills, spoke to the
Historical Society on October 15. As
many people expressed an interest in her
presentation, we are including an
excerpts from her talk:

Memories of Cavendish &

Glimmerstone: My memories of
Cavendish and Glimmerstone trace back
to the early 1930’s when I first visited
the nearby Cavendish home of the Olin
Gays, whose two daughters, Libby and
Barbara, were college classmates of
mine. One very warm afternoon we were
invited for tea at the home of the Leon
Gays (Olin’s brother) who also lived in
Cavendish, and it was then that I saw
Glimmerstone for the first time.

It was so beautiful in the summer sun,
which picked up the granite sparkles in
the silvery sheen of the Gneiss formation
and mica schist of its walls. In that
stately setting, rimmed by lovely trees
(which, unfortunately were cut down by
a subsequent owner) was a vision of a
love affair which began, and was to last
for many years, for, though I did not
know it at the time, I would later (in
August of 1941) marry Stearns, the elder
son of the Leon Gay’s.

On that first visit, the three of us were
led to a large screened porch which
overlooked wonderful gardens and
grounds, where a fountain played into
the pool, beyond which was this sweet
children’s playhouse overlooking a
tennis court. We were served iced tea
prepared with fresh mint syrup made by
Mrs. Gay and there were dainty cakes
and cookies, too! Mrs. Gay was British-
born and everything was done in the
elegant British manner. I remember that
Mr. Gay made a brief appearance and
quickly delighted us with his lovely
sense of humor.

Gay Brother’s Mill and World War

Two: Gay Brother’s Mill was founded in
1869 in Tunbridge by Joseph Stearns
Gay and one of his sons, James. In 1886,
the business was moved to Cavendish
and later James and his brother Charles
took control of the business. In 1922, the
brothers Leon and Olin Gay took over
after James decided to retire....In 1939,
Gay Brother’s purchased the Vermont
Mill in Ludlow, which had been built in
1840. Stearns [Barbara Gay’s husband]
became the mill’s superintendent in
1942.

During WWII, both mills were running three full shifts a day, seven days a week and there was no complaining about long hours. The mills flourished with contracts for Navy overcoats, khaki material and blankets, 200,000 of which went to ships which transported troops. One very famous ship, the Queen Mary, received some 10,000 of the mill's blankets as she had been converted into a fast troop carrier ferrying the Atlantic. Blankets also went to war workers, the Maritime Commission, and to other organizations under the "Lend-Lease" Program. Some blankets and uniform cloth even went to the Russians, then our allies. In later years, during the cold war, when Russia was no friend to our country, Stearns would express dismay that Gay Brother's had supplied them material.

In the towns of Cavendish and Ludlow, citizens took on all manner of unpaid jobs to help the war cause. Stearns became Captain of the Statue Guard Ski Patrol, which trained once or twice a week on the steepest terrain, even skiing straight down the power lines! I, along with similar other such volunteers nationwide, was set up in an observation tower in the middle of a barren field three miles from our home two or three times a week to watch for enemy aircraft. My other job was to visit stores in Cavendish and Proctorsville and monitor the prices of all the items on the shelves, in case there would be price gouging. I don't remember ever finding any. Both Stearns and I patrolled the local streets to check for the slightest cracks of light from behind drawn curtains in homes, which could mark the town as a possible bombing target for enemy aircraft. The town women knit

countless scarves and gloves for overseas shipment. The efforts of all the local civilian population was most moving indeed. Ironically, this was a difficult time for Stearns, as he wanted to be drafted into active military service to help the war effort in that way. The woolen company and its management were designated as "war critical," however, and both of Stearn's enlistment applications were rejected.

Retirement: In the early 1950's, Leon and Olin Gay felt the time had come to retire from the woolen business and its heavy demands and turned to well-earned lives of travel and pursuit of their many special interests. Stearns and family moved north to Bristol, where he became the owner of Drake Smith and Company, a box factory, which he successfully converted into a highly respected line of hand-rubbed pine furniture.... Later, Stearns made a career change, becoming a building contractor of fine homes in Addison County. He passed away in 1981. He was only 69 years old, but he and the Gay family left many memories and accomplishments behind and today I still think of how lucky I was to have been a part of their lives and times, especially those years here in Cavendish.

Congratulations to Craig Rankin

A long time, and very active member of CHS, we were pleased to see Craig recognized for his continual talents as a landscape architect. At the October annual meeting and dinner, Craig was presented with a lifetime achievement award by the Vermont Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Not only has Craig's annual

4th of July plant sale been an important fundraiser for CHS, but many of those present described how these were often the healthiest plants in their gardens. A special thanks to Stephen Plunkard, a landscape architect and long time Cavendish resident, for helping to make this happen.



Christmas is Coming (an excerpt from *Cavendish Hillside Farm*)

As Christmas time approached our excitement grew. There would be parties at school and church. About a week before the big day, Dad we kids would venture into the forest to find the perfect tree. Every year we seemed to find the perfect one, though we had cut it the previous year. In later years Junior and I were allowed to choose and bring home the tree by ourselves. Often the perfect specimen in the forest proved to be sadly lacking in the living room. But Mother never said a word and cheerfully praised our selection. I can honestly say that after it was loaded with decorations it didn't look so bad.

Dad would nail together a two-by-four stand and it was set up in the window in the living room. In the early years we didn't have electricity and my parents felt that candles were too dangerous. The candles were put on the tree but never lit. The tree was trimmed with glass balls, metal twisted strips for icicles, and knitted and crocheted ornaments my mother made. Heavy foil

garlands were draped around it before the delicate tinsel we have today became common. We made paper chains and cut out countless paper snowflakes to enhance the scene.

Mom always made fruitcake, maple sugar cakes and popcorn balls. When I was twelve or so she started cutting and decorating special Christmas cookies. A box was given to each family of cousins, with plenty left for us to enjoy. Christmas, today, must have decorated cookies!

Christmas morning found the tree decked out in knitted mittens, hats and scarves. My mother had been working late at night for weeks.

Out stockings always had an orange in the toe, paper dolls, coloring books and crayons, some candy and gum, pencils and a banana sticking out of the top. Once or twice we received the dreaded stick and piece of cola for being bad. Mom always produced the desired items we had expected after we had sworn to reform.

Cavendish Hillside Farms 1939-1957 by Sandra Field Sterns, the archivist and curator of CHS, makes a wonderful holiday present. To purchase a copy, send \$10, plus \$3 for shipping and handling to PO Box 472, Cavendish, VT 05142. Checks should be made payable to CHS. Because of holiday mail, order early.

BECOME A MEMBER-JOIN A COMMITTEE

If you have not joined the Cavendish Historical Society, please consider doing so by completing the form below and sending a check, payable to CHS, to CHS, PO Box 472, Cavendish, VT 05142. All contributions are tax deductible.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-Mail: _____

Membership Level

Individual Member \$10 Senior Member 65+ \$5
 Household Member \$15 Contributing Member \$250
 Sustaining Member \$500

I would be interested in serving as a volunteer

I would be interested in serving on the following committee(s):

Program Planning Fundraising Building (Museum)
 Archives Budget

<p style="text-align: center;">Cavendish Historical Society, PO Box 472, Cavendish VT 05142 802-226-7807 margoc@tds.net</p>

Cavendish Historical Society
PO Box 472
Cavendish, VT 05142

Cavendish Historical Society, PO Box 472, Cavendish VT 05142
802-226-7807 margoc@tds.net