

BULLETIN



Number 120

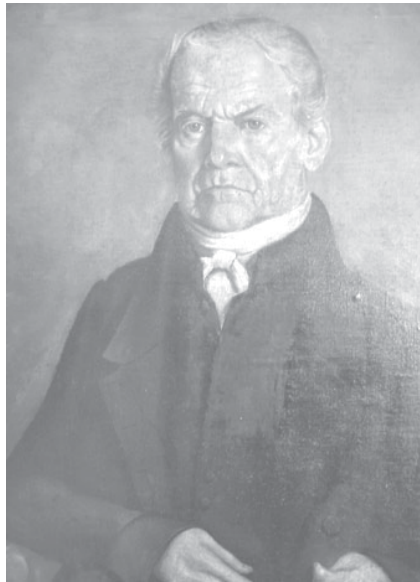
Orleans County Historical Society, Inc. • Brownington, Vermont 05860

Summer 2010

Timothy Hinman—reprobate or hero? by Gail Sangree

Timothy Hinman has enjoyed a far better posthumous reputation than he enjoyed during the last part of his life. Partly due to his grandson Norman Bingham's praise-filled "A Sketch of the Life of the Honorable Timothy Hinman" published in 1892, forty-two years after Hinman's death, popular opinion has held him in high regard. Although he had many noteworthy accomplishments in his lifetime, county court records and town land records indicate that Hinman also may have betrayed the public trust and cheated business associates.

True, he did some praise-worthy things. Born in 1761, he was just sixteen when one thousand men marched forth from his town of Woodbury, Connecticut to fight the British. He enlisted and served in the militia and the regular army until 1783. He acquired surveying, road-building, and bridge-making skills, which later proved valuable when he headed north to that large, unsettled section of Vermont now called Orleans and Essex Counties. Then, after the war, his large town of Woodbury subdivided into the smaller towns of Southbury, Bethlehem, Roxbury, and Washington, so Hinman had experience in getting a new town organized. Comparing the earliest documents of Derby, Vermont with those of Southbury, Connecticut, one can see that Southbury served as a template for the founding of Derby. Together with his brother Isaac and other adventurous men from Connecticut, he built a road from Greensboro to Derby on the Canadian border, and expended great effort in creating a



Timothy Hinman (1762-1850).
1843 portrait by Joseph Rutherford

town where others from southern New England would like to settle.

Once Derby was established, Hinman recruited settlers to move to Derby so that it would prosper or "improve." He took an active role in town governance and became a justice of the peace and later judge in the newly formed Orleans County Court. Like many another early settler, he bought property at tax sales in several nearby towns, later selling those lots to newcomers to the community. He opened a store and tavern and extended credit to his neighbors. He was an indefatigable petitioner to the state legislature to levy taxes to build roads to connect Derby with the rest of Vermont and later with Canada.

If we take a look at the court records of what is now Orleans, Caledonia, and Essex Counties we find that in the first decade of the 19th century, Hinman engaged in some questionable practices, such as trading with the enemy during the Embargo of 1807 as did quite a few of his hard pressed neighbors, defaulting on bank loans, and defrauding his friends. For example, in 1811, there was a petition from the selectmen of Holland declaring that in 1808 when towns were assessed a tax for building a state prison, the selectmen had given Holland's tax money to Hinman with the understanding that he would turn the money over to the state. They learned later that he never did so. Also, the town of Morgan gave their assessment to Hinman, and he only relayed half of it to the state. These examples hint at the possibility of other irregularities since Hinman had been tax collector for several towns since 1792.

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Schedule of events

The Early History of Westmore & Willoughby Lake – Friday, August 13, 7:30 p.m.

Dick Simpson's talk in the Westmore Fellowship Hall will benefit the Orleans County Historical Society. Suggested adult donation \$5. Children and students free.

Hands on History "Pass Times Past"— Saturday, August 14, 10 a.m. to noon

Try a game of Graces, Make a tangram, puzzle out a rebus, make and fly a kite. For families with school age children. \$3 per child, pre-registration required, 754-2022.

Old Stone House Day — Sunday, August 15, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Our biggest event of the year, with museum open house, demonstrations of traditional skills, crafts, farmers market, children's activities, music, animals and food. This year's theme is "Timothy Hinman's Road." Free admission. Parking \$3 per car. Lunch available.

Introduction to Thumb Latches — Saturday, Aug. 21, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Lucian Avery will teach students with previous blacksmithing experience how to forge a traditional interior thumb latch. Refine your eye and forging skills, as you connect to a long tradition of American ironwork. Cost \$75, or \$65 for museum members plus \$10 material fee. Pre-registration required, 754-2022.

Herbal Walk and Supper — Wednesday, August 25, 3 to 7 p.m.

Loraine Janowski will lead a walk to find and identify local herbs, and teach participants to harvest and process the plants for teas, tinctures and salves. Students will help prepare a light supper in which herbs add flavor and nutrition. Meet at the Hall House. Cost \$15, \$12 members, plus \$20 materials fee. Pre-registration required, 754-2022.

Antique Appraisal Show – Wednesday, August 25, 7 p.m.

Antique appraiser Jim Marquis will be at the Grange Hall in Brownington Village to appraise items on Wednesday evening. Appraisals cost \$10 per item, or three items for \$25. No jewelry. Refreshments will be served. Please register in advance by phoning 754-2022 or e-mailing director@oldstonehousemuseum.org

Hands on History "The Work Bee" — Saturday, September 11, 10 a.m. to noon

Husking bees and quilting parties, much was accomplished and workers were rewarded with music, dancing, food and drink. For families with school age children, \$3 per child. Pre-registration required, 754-2022.

Fall Foliage Run & Bike — Sunday, September 12

Sunday morning a half marathon, and 5K Run & Walk, as well as a Bicycle Race will be start and finish in front of the Old Stone House. Refreshments, T-Shirts and Prizes. Check our website or call for start times. Pre-register by calling 754-2022.

Apple Pressing: The Early History of Westmore & Willoughby Lake — Friday, August 13, 7:30 p.m.

Dick Simpson's talk in the Westmore Fellowship Hall will benefit the Orleans County Historical Society. Suggested adult donation \$5. Children and students free.

Cheese & Apple Tasting — Sunday, October 3, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Come sample the creations of farmstead cheese makers from northern Vermont, produced from the milk from sheep, goats and cows, and learn about their process. There will be demonstrations of cheese making, cider molasses production, and apple pressing. The Best Boston Marrow Squash Contest will be held after lunch. Lunch will be available. Admission \$5.

Candlelight Harvest Dinner — Saturday, October 16, 6 p.m.

The museum is planning an elegant dinner at the Samuel Read Hall House, with heirloom recipes using fresh local products, prepared with old fashioned techniques and served in an historic atmosphere. Seating is limited to 50 people for this special evening. Check our website in September for the menu and cost, and call 754-2022 to make your reservations.

THE OLD STONE HOUSE MUSEUM BULLETIN

The Orleans County Historical Society, Inc.
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On a larger scale, in December 1808 Hinman, along with Ralph Parker and Melvin Vining, borrowed \$11,000 from the Burlington office of the Vermont State Bank with the intention of building a large warehouse at Derby Line, directly on the Canadian border. He had borrowed smaller sums in the past, which, according to Parker, had been around \$1,000. When Parker signed for the loan, he was unaware that this time the amount was much larger. After he learned the truth, Parker made bank officials aware that Hinman would have a problem repaying the loan, and just eight months after granting him the money, the bank recalled the loan. Hinman's response was to borrow an additional \$3000 from the Middlebury branch of the bank. Eventually, this reckless behavior led to the seizure of most of his property and his incarceration in debtors' prison in 1810. Since Parker was a co-signer of the loan, he also was liable and lost a substantial portion of his property. In order to avoid prison, young Melvin Vining, who owned no property, absconded to Canada.

After these difficulties came to light, Orleans County Court records and the records of the state legislature are filled with civil cases and petitions brought against Hinman by his creditors, including his own brother Isaac. In 1813, Isaac Hinman submitted a petition stating that in 1810 he had cosigned for \$1,500 as security for his troubled brother. When Timothy was unable to repay his loan, \$350 worth of Isaac's property was attached. Isaac requested that the state grant him an extension on repaying this sum so that he wouldn't have to sell his farm, resulting in "turning himself and his large family out of doors."

When desperate for money, sometimes even honorable people will take unethical and illegal measures to secure it. In 1812, Elisha Bartholemew, a Canadian business acquaintance of Hinman, petitioned the legislature that he had been held in prison for a year because in

1809, Hinman had duped him with a fraudulent check for \$3,000, which Bartholemew had tried to cash.

The rules had changed in the years since Hinman had opened his store and tavern and granted liberal credit to his neighbors. At one point, recording the transactions from his business in his day book (1798-1809), he wrote, "Previous to this page, all is posted which was necessary to be posted and some more, but finding so many inexplicable things I dare not venture any further in that way." The accounts didn't balance, but as long as everybody got by, he didn't fret about it. That casual attitude toward finance didn't work when you were dealing with distant creditors and operating a business on a large scale with capital furnished by a lending institution. Whatever his intentions may have been, Hinman was caught in a web of deceit, changing economic climate, and international warfare.

After serving his time in prison, he returned to Derby and resumed life on a more modest scale. He was chosen to be pound keeper in 1821 and was reinstated as justice of the peace, signing property deeds and performing marriages. In 1836 at age seventy-five he represented the citizens of Derby at Montpelier to draft a new state constitution. And after his death the legend grew so that his gravestone bears these words: "First settler of Derby. A soldier of the Revolutionary Army. Patriot & faithful honest citizen. A just and good man."

Gail Sangree was a college English instructor and pursued her studies in Timothy Hinman as an independent research project at Wesleyan University between 1997 and 2001. She researched census data, land records, and court records in courthouses, town clerks' offices, and libraries in Newport, Derby, St. Johnsbury, Middlesex, Montpelier, Sherbrooke, Ottawa, Quebec City and Connecticut.

Archival vault addition to the Twilight House

The Board of Directors of the Orleans County Historical Society has hired Spates Construction of Derby to build a 23' X 18' addition to the ell of the Twilight House that will contain a heavily insulated concrete vault which will provide fireproof, climate controlled protection for the most fragile items in our collection. We have in our care irreplaceable documents, negatives, photographs, journals, and rare books which will be best preserved in a consistently cool environment with low humidity. The addition will be built on the footprint of the former woodshed, designed to look on the outside exactly like the old shed.

The vault design allows easy accessibility of documents for researchers, and remodeling part of the current ell provides an adjoining workroom. The good-sized vault would have space to accommodate additional documents that the museum expects to acquire in the future, and could even allow space to protect treasures from smaller historical societies in the area.

Work on the addition will begin in August. The cost will be \$106,000. Donations are needed for this long overdue project to "protect and preserve the history of Orleans County." Please help us if you can.

Orleans County Historical Society, Inc.
Old Stone House Museum
109 Old Stone House Road
Brownington, VT 05860

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You're invited to Old Stone House Day on August 15!

Our annual celebration of history and heritage, Old Stone House Day, will be held on Sunday, August 15, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be demonstrations of traditional skills, a museum open house, a farmers market, craft sale, children's activities, food, music and animals.

The theme this year is "Timothy Hinman's Road," a celebration of the first road built through Orleans County, stretching from Greensboro to Derby. Timothy Hinman and others built it in the 1790's to open a route from the Bailey Hazen Road, the first road built in northern Vermont, to Derby where he had purchased land. Most of the people who settled in Orleans County in the late 1790's and early 1800's followed Hinman's road to their new homes. The earliest settlements were built along the road, and in later years it became part of the stage route between Boston and Montreal. In 1823 the Orleans County Grammar School, the first secondary school in Orleans County, was built beside it in Brownington Village at the base of Prospect Hill, in the center of the county. Athenian Hall, which is now the Old Stone House Museum, was completed in 1836 to serve as the dormitory and additional instructional space for that school.

Today the portion of the road in Greensboro, Glover and Barton is mostly a woods trail, with some sections class 3 and 4 roads. The parts of the Hinman Road in Brownington and Derby are still used as a primary road.

The many descendants of Timothy and Phoebe Hinman are invited to be our special guests for Old Stone House Day. Gail Sangree, an authority on Timothy Hinman, will give a presentation on his life at 2 p.m. in the Samuel Read Hall House. Neal Perry will offer stagecoach rides with Fred Webster's new stagecoach up and down the Hinman Road, with proceeds going toward the agricultural equipment exhibit barn which we plan to build in 2011.

Wish List

Timothy Hinman descendants to be our special guests on Old Stone House Day!

Volunteers for Museum Software Basic Cataloguing Help and Museum Tour Guides.

Donations! Help us pay for the new Archival Vault Addition.

Call us at 754-2022 if you can help.