

The New Hartford Historical Society

N E W H A R T F O R D , C T

*From the Board:
Exciting News!*

*Then and Now:
Baker(S)ville*

How many of you drive through the center of Bakerville and wonder what the small dark brown/grey building is at the corner of Route 202 and Cotton Hill opposite Radwicks?

It is the George Jones Blacksmith Shop; a unique and historically significant part of New Hartford's past. Its relatively intact survival is rare. Once as common as gas stations, few unchanged blacksmith shops survive nationally today. Ours is one of them.

I write about it because, thanks to the outstanding generosity of the Goff Family, who lovingly preserved it for decades; it has now entered a new era in its life. The Goff family has donated it to the New Hartford Historical Society with the desire that we preserve its historical integrity and that we tell its story to the public.

This wonderful donation begins a new chapter for the shop and for us. Our intent is to preserve the shop and to tell its story publicly. It is no small undertaking, but we firmly believe that the history of Bakerville, and the men and women who built it are important. The Blacksmith shop is a key part of that history and we look forward to sharing it with you.

Anne C. Hall, Ph.D

Photograph 5776 Jones' Blacksmith Shop, Bakersville, Conn.



What is In A Name?

Is it a pond? Is it a lake? The debate over West Hill 'Pond' or West Hill 'Lake' is unlikely to resolve itself anytime soon. However, the water body in question has had other names throughout the years. The first maps called it Shephard's Pond., after David Shephard, who moved to New Hartford from Farmington in 1738 and was the first colonist to establish a farm on West Hill. Daniel died in 1784 and though his descendants remained in the area, the name never stuck and vanished by the early 1800s.

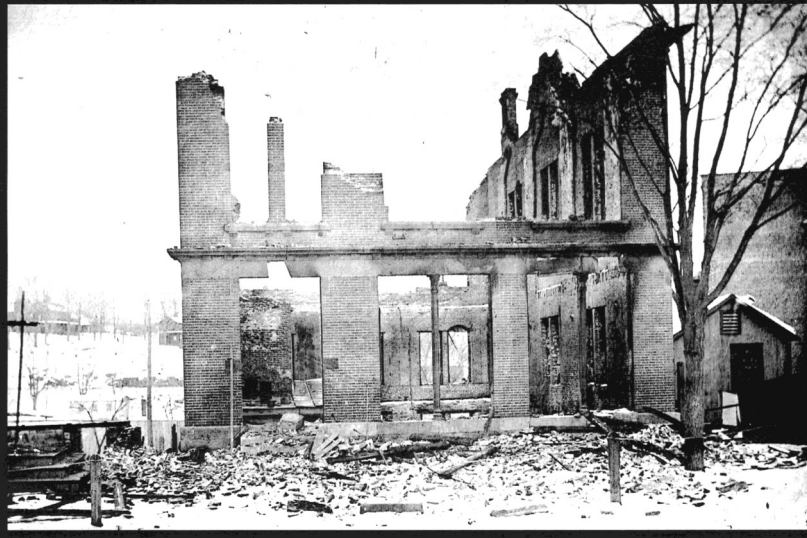
The other early name has a more complex history. In the 1800s it was claimed that the Native American name for the lake was 'Wonk-sunk-a-munk'. It was stated that a 1734 survey reported this name. In the late 1800s, the popularity of Native American place names soared; and this name was in general use through the mid 20th century. The difficulty with this name is that the actual meaning and etymology is unknown. Is it a misspelled but genuine Native American name? Or is it a romantic creation? More research would need to be done to answer that question accurately.

In the meantime West Hill Pond? Or Lake? Tell us what you think!

A.C.H.

DID YOU KNOW? RANDOM FACTS ABOUT NEW HARTFORD!

Ruins of Town Hall after 1893 fire



Happy Birthday to the Town Hall! Or not?

150 years ago the Town Hall was built and dedicated. Today this is the section of the Town Hall on the right if you are looking at the building from Route 44. The first Town Hall, built in 1876, burned down in 1893. It looked very different from today's. It dominated the center with a high clock tower and marked the town as a rising industrial center.

Why was the first Town Hall built over a century after the town was founded? Well, from the 1820s to the 1870s a politically fraught question raged between Nepaug and North Village. Who should be the center? The resolution of this argument and the dedication of the Town Hall had been seen as a way to bring the town together with parades and celebration. Following the fire it was rebuilt on the 1876 foundation, keeping that date alive.

Did you know?

150 Years Ago: In July of 1876, on July 4th the Town Hall was dedicated.

140 Years Ago: The North End School was built on Main Street. This building still stands as an apartment building. It was one of the first 'big' multiple room schools in town.

120 Years Ago: The Nepaug and Bakerville post-offices were discontinued. Bakerville had been established in 1851!

90 Years Ago: The section of Route 219 that goes over Town Hill was opened to traffic, prior to this the road had switchbacked down the hill towards 202 and did not go across the Nepaug floodplain. Instead you took Carpenter and Dings or Dings and Bruning.

50 Years Ago: The town population was 4300. A number of large Industries were still in town including the Waring Company (now Collinsville Antiques), Ovation Instruments, Hurley Manufacturing, and Hitchcock Chair.

NOTES FROM THE MUSEUM

There is a lot of information in the New Hartford Historical Society's files. There are also unexpected surprises. The photograph that you see above, of the burned shell of the Town Hall, was almost impossible to decipher. We have some dedicated volunteers who would be happy to

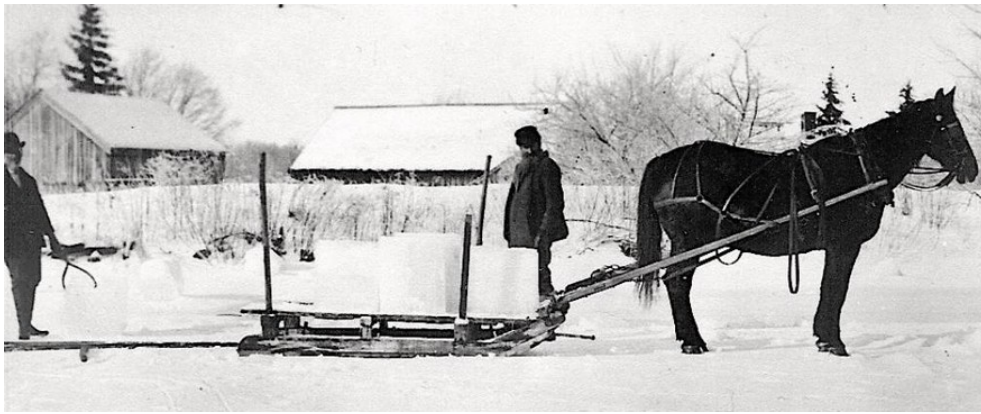
help unravel a mystery photo if you have one. Remember it is you bringing us your information that creates the history people love in the decades to come!

Here is an image of what that photograph first looked like:

By Anne Bailey



**CAN YOU FIND ME?
A PHOTO FROM OUR COLLECTION:**



After a winter like this one, the seasonal ice harvest in New Hartford would have been massive. This image shows people harvesting ice for their own use; but New Hartford boasted a much bigger ice industry on Greenwood Pond....now the West Branch of the Farmington.

**A VANISHED
INDUSTRY:
TEASEL
FARMING IN
NEW HARTFORD**

New Hartford’s agricultural history has naturally changed over three centuries. But one constant has always existed: does this product have a market? To whom can it be sold? Today, with multiple CSA farms, orchards, vineyards, beekeeping, and flowers, the town’s agriculture is dominated by specialty produce rather than large volume, low value crops such as grains, dairy, or beef cattle.

However, despite the diversity of today’s crops, there is one plant that is not grown: Fuller’s Teasel (*Dipsacus fullorum*).



In the early 1800’s teasel was grown on the Ramstein Farm in New Hartford, now known as the Raymond Farm. A crop of teasel on those fields must have been an amazing sight, for the flowers bloom first: a wave of purple

stretching down the the hill. Teasel was a high value crop that once established needed little tending. Teasel from New Hartford was sold across the region.

The dried seed heads of teasel were vital to the processing of wool for cloth. In the fulling stage of the process the wool must be straightened and smoothed. Today this is done with steel pins, but in the late 1700s, teasel was used; its spiky hard seed heads were set in massive brushes. The seed heads worked well, but needed regular replacement, so the crop was in constant and high demand.

America250 History Talk: Women of the American Revolution. April 26th, 1 PM. At the American Mural Project, 90 Whiting St, Winsted, CT. Sponsored by the Brooks-Greenwood Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution

Farmington Valley Heritage Network: ‘The Traitor’s Homecoming’ April 23, 2026, 7pm; Avon Senior Center, Avon

New Hartford Land Trust: May 9 – Hayward Farm Tour at 9:30 a.m. Peter Hayward will talk about the history of his family’s orchard. Limited to NHLT members. Registration required. E-mail newhartfordlandtrust@yahoo.com.

NHHS: The Bald Eagle, A Nation’s Symbol, and the Farmington River. A Presentation by Ginny Apple, Master Wildlife Conservationist. Time and Place TBA

River Rocks: June 20th, New Hartford’s annual music event by the Farmington River in the Hurley Business Park field. Come visit our booth! We will have a variety of artifacts and maps on display.

July 4th Celebration: It is still in the planning stages, but we are definitely planning to celebrate 250 years!

