



Historic Bakersfield News and Notes

BAKERSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
A 501(C)(3) NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

2024 COMMUNITY EVENTS

Ongoing: BHS normally meets the second Wednesday of each month at 7 pm in our building. Please call to confirm date, location and time--call 827-3042. Our meetings are open to anyone and everyone who is interested in the history and future of Bakersfield.

Saturday, June 29: Brigham Academy Alumni Meeting and Potluck Buffet--by donation

Saturday, July 6: Independence Day Celebration. The parade will start at 6:00 pm. Around 6:30, after the parade, there will be ice cream cones, homemade pie and bottled water for sale at the Historical Society Building. The fire department is again offering burgers and hotdogs for sale.

Fireworks start at dusk.

BAKERSFIELD NEWS AND NOTES



Our 2024 Sugar on Snow party was the best we've ever done.

At the end of this winter people were really ready for a Sign-of-Spring!

The Cemetery Commission is updating its application to the National Registry of Historic Places for the Hearse House, which will help to get grant funding for its restoration.

Only seven Hearse Houses remain in Vermont. Our hearse now lives at the Shelburne Museum.

An update on the Hearse House is on page 2

Photo by Steve Morse





BHS PROJECT UPDATES

Roof damage that the building sustained in the January wind storm has now been repaired thanks to Jim Billado and an emergency grant from the Paul A. Bruhn Fund, facilitated by Preservation Trust of Vermont, which helped to cover the cost of the repairs.



Another completed project is the access to the third floor of our building—now much easier and safer. Before and after pictures of the work are left and right..

Bakersfield Hearse House Update

The Hearse House is one of our community's historic gems. It was built in 1891 on land that included easements for use and maintenance purchased from the neighboring property owner for \$25. The parcel borders the town cemetery (Maple Grove Cemetery) at the northwest corner. The building served our community in support of town funerary responsibilities in a time prior to the existence of funeral businesses.



The Bakersfield Cemetery Commission, established in 1875, has used the building for their care and maintenance of Maple Grove Cemetery. Visitors to the building will see the old hand tools used to maintain the cemetery and town common at that time. Bakersfield's hearse is on display at Shelburne Museum.

The Cemetery Commission, working in cooperation with Historic Preservation of Vermont and our local Conservation Committee, was able to have a structural engineer evaluate the building in 2022. The recommendation was to replace rotted sills and floor joists and raise the building one foot above ground level. Grants for this project have not been an option. Continued delay in maintenance could be devastating for the building. Fortunately, when asked to help stabilize the building, a contractor who has worked on similar projects at our Historical Society building and for area residents agreed to assist with this project. Without his passion for saving historic buildings and his knowledge and skills needed to address the problems, restoration of this building would not have happened. The slump in the middle of the building is gone, walls once again stand straight and tight, the floors are safe to walk on, and the front veranda is receiving its piece of the restoration. The folks to thank for their work on this project (to date) are Mike Lanphear, Brad Canon, Phil Lumbr, and Chris Reed.

Photo by Linda McCall



Carriage Barn Update

The Preservation Trust of Vermont is touring their funded projects this summer. They have published a brochure featuring works in progress from Addison, Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle counties. The carriage barn in our town park is one of those projects. A grant is supporting a conditions assessment that will help the town prioritize repairs and plan for future use of this building.

HERE'S A GOOD QUESTION--

WHAT ARE GORES AND WHY DID BAKERSFIELD HAVE SO MANY OF THEM?

In Vermont, gores and grants are unincorporated portions of a county which are not part of any town and have limited self-government. Many are uninhabited

Mark Bushnell, of Vermont Digger, describes gores as "slivers of land squeezed between adjoining towns--small irregular tracts left over when surveyors plotted boundary lines between neighboring towns that didn't quite meet." Many teams of surveyors were creating neat blocks of land that would become towns within the uneven boundaries of the future state and over uncertain terrain. Streams, prevailing ledge ridges, hills and mountains, and compass directions were the standards for assigning boundary lines. Gores were often unsettled areas of not very good land—the “left overs “of this process. There were once over 60 of them scattered within Vermont. Most were, in time, joined to adjacent towns. The Legislature used them as rewards or obligations to persons asking the State for land or payments for services—such as surveying.

Surveyors like Scottish immigrant, James Whitelaw, traveled with crews of 4 or 5 men and their equipment such as posts and a 66 foot length of chain [the “chain” is a unit of length, 80 chains equals one mile] camping out in the uncharted wilderness to carry out their assignments. In 1787, Whitelaw was named Vermont's second Surveyor General by the Legislature.

One such person was Samuel Avery of Westminster, a lawyer and land speculator, who had received grants of land in Vermont from Massachusetts province and New York province but not any from New Hampshire. After the American Revolution, New Hampshire's grants were the only ones recognized by the new Vermont government. The legislature did not recognize Avery's grants but wished to compensate him for his losses with other land since he was a prominent citizen by then and had fought in the Revolution. Over a 5 year period he was granted eight separate and widely scattered tracts totaling 52,000 acres. His intention was to sell them at a profit, although this didn't work out as well as planned. Most of them were referred to as Avery's Gore or Avery's Grant. All but one (in Essex County) were absorbed into adjacent towns.

Bakersfield eventually claimed a part of one of these Avery's Gores. In fact the town of Bakersfield seems to have been created mostly out of gores.



Among the surveyors who were compensated for their work with land grants, was Luke Knowlton, man of affairs, speculator, and loyalist when convenient. He secured a grant of ten thousand acres from the Vermont Legislature which became known as Knowlton's Gore, and the charter was signed in 1791 by the first governor, Thomas Chittenden. Being a person to look after his own interests he very soon sold out to Joseph Baker at great gain. The original portion of Knowlton's Gore was in the center of the present township, Bakersfield.

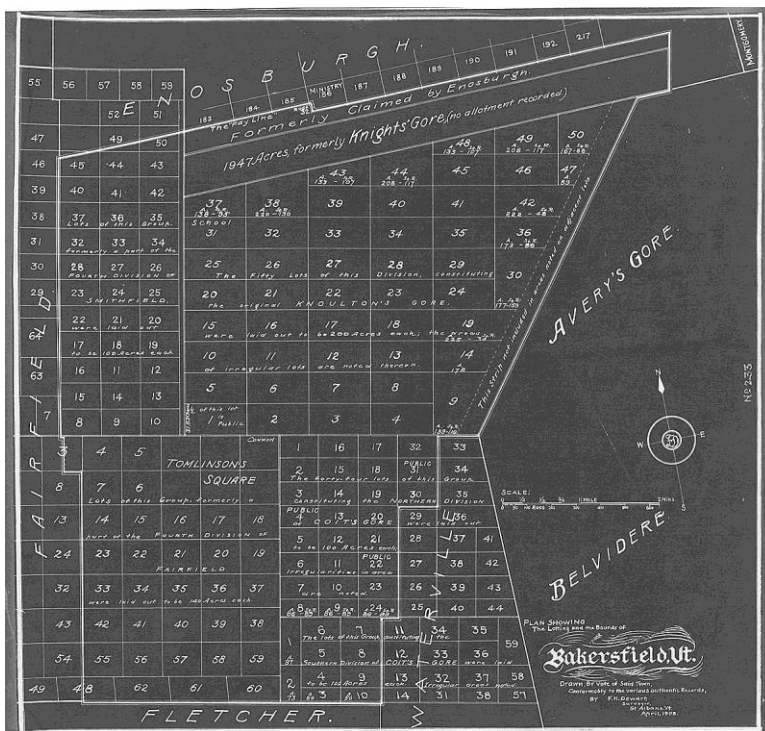
The tract of Fairfield lying south and west of the Common was joined to Knowlton's Gore, and part of Smithfield, once a town not a gore, west of the village (the line was west of the present Catholic Cemetery), was annexed, and the town renamed Bakersfield by the legislature in 1792. The rest of the former Smithfield was annexed by Fairfield.



The unnamed gores to the right of Smithfield, Fairfield and Fletcher are probably Knowlton's Gore and Coit's Gore on a map from 1795.

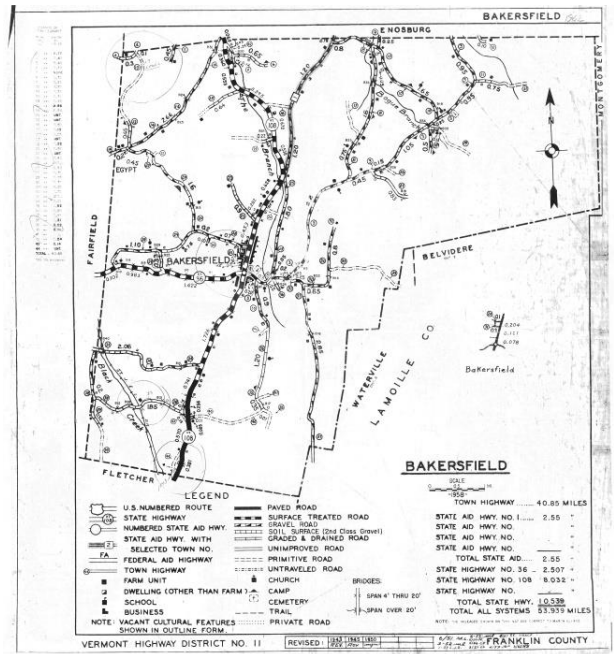
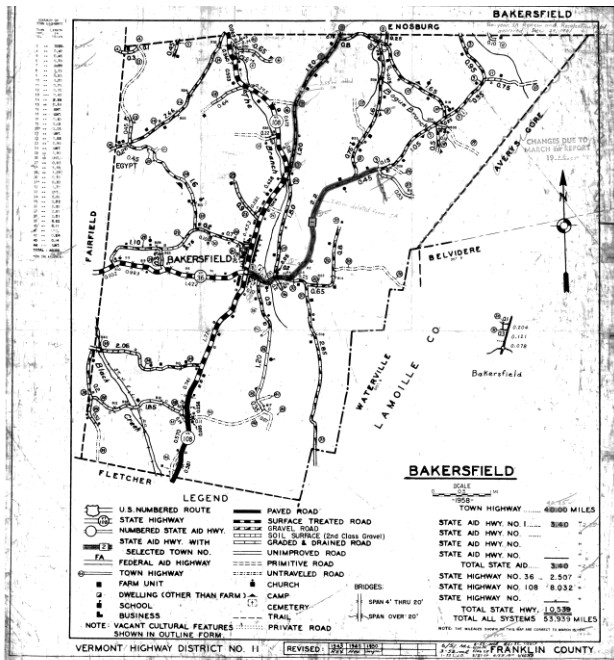
Knight's Gore was a tract of land lying north of Knowlton's Gore annexed to Bakersfield in 1798. Later, in order to straighten the line, a portion on the northwest was joined to Enosburg by the legislature. At one time folks who lived south and east of the village were in Coit's Gore, a tract surveyed by James Savage and William Coit and granted to Coit.

Its main road, the Gore Road is now Kings Hill Road. Coit's Gore was annexed to Knowlton's Gore/Bakersfield in 1799. In 1824: the southeast part of Bakersfield, formerly in Coit's Gore became part of the new town of Waterville. Coit's Gore mountain road, now Waterville Mountain road connects the two.



The above lot map of Bakersfield, created in 1903, shows how our town grew as each section was added. Knowlton's Gore is the central section with the largest lots. To the left are smaller lots that are the section from Smithfield and below that, a section from Fairfield that with Knowlton's Gore became Bakersfield. The small section at the top that has no lots in it is Knight's Gore. Coit's Gore is the two part block at the bottom right divided by the stepped line. The part to the left remains in Bakersfield while the section to the right was attached to Waterville.

Avery's Gore was a tract of land left without grantees after the adjoining townships had been granted. There were few settlers and sometimes these were included in the Bakersfield census. In 1858 a portion of this gore was set in Montgomery. The remainder of the gore, about three thousand acres, was added to Bakersfield Township by the legislature in 1961.



Bakersfield before and after the addition of Avery's Gore

Note: Although Kellysburgh appears on the 1795 map in the neighborhood of Bakersfield I could not find any other information about it, including whether or not it really existed. Also that map was already out of date in 1795, Bakersfield having been chartered three years earlier.

Sources for this story and generally interesting places to visit include:

Then Again: A use for Vermont's leftover bits and pieces by Mark Bushnell:

<https://vtdigger.org/2017/03/26/then-again-a-use-for-vermonts-leftover-bits-and-pieces/>

Bakersfield Vermont: the way it was the way it is by Elsie C. Wells

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Averys_Gore,_Vermont

Northern New England Has Gores – Who Knew? by Edward T. Howe, Ph.D.

<https://newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/northern-new-england-has-gores-who-knew/>

https://old-maps.com/vermont/vt_state/

https://vtransmaps.vermont.gov/Maps/TownMapSeries/Franklin_Co/BAKERSFIELD/

<https://mapgeeks.org/vermont/>

Library of Congress—general maps--Vermont

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/general-maps/?fa=location%3AVermont&sb=date&st=list&c=150>

<https://historicbakersfieldvt.org/>

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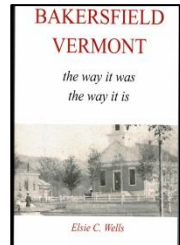
Find us on Facebook:
Bakersfield Historical Society, Corp.
(802) 827-3042

Support Your Historical Society

We depend on memberships, charitable donations, grants, fundraisers, the work of volunteers, and town taxpayers to maintain the Historical Society Building for use in the community and to preserve our town's history by safekeeping a resource of local artifacts and information.

PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE by Bakersfield Historical Society

- Elsie Wells *Bakersfield: the way it was, the way it is* \$25 (shipping is included) The book is also available for purchase at H.F. Brigham Library.
- Map of Bakersfield Village – reprint of Beers Atlas color \$10



Cut here and send to the Bakersfield Historical Society, PO Box 70, Bakersfield, VT 05441

2024 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

BENEFACTOR \$100 _____ PATRON \$50 _____ FAMILY \$20 _____ INDIVIDUAL \$10 _____

I PREFER TO SUPPORT BHS WITH A GIFT OF _____

Our Restoration Gift Campaign is to help in the restoration and use of Bakersfield's landmark building in order to preserve the past for the benefit of present and future generations. Donations marked "for restoration" will go toward the building restoration/repairs fund and not into the general fund.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone _____ Email: _____

The Bakersfield Historical Society is a non-profit 501(C)(3) corporation. Gifts and memberships above the family level are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. You can increase the level of your support if your employer has a matching grant program.

<https://historicbakersfieldvt.org/>