



Featured performer Rupert Wates performs at the November Coffeehouse hosted by the Andover Community Association at the Highland Lake Grange Hall in East Andover. Photo: Steve Colardeau

Featured Performers Announced for December and January CoffeeHouses

Beginning fourth year of Coffeehouses

Larry Chase

As it rounds out its third year of free concerts, the Andover Community Coffeehouse brings veteran New Hampshire (and beyond) singer-songwriter Wendy Keith and her Alleged Band to center stage on Friday evening, December 15, at 7 P.M. She'll be joined there by three accompanists on bass, dobro, saxophone, clarinet, flute, harp and pennywhistle.

From Keith's website: "Wendy covers a wide range of styles and is at home with Americana, original singer-songwriter, blues, gospel, and jazz."

The concert will be held in the Highland Lake Grange Hall, 7 Chase Hill Road in East Andover. Although attendance is free, donations, which are shared with the performers and the Andover Congregational Church, owner of the Grange Hall, are gratefully accepted.

Also appearing onstage will be up to a dozen open-microphone performers, whose contributions in previous months have ranged from the spoken word to show-business, jazz, folk, bluegrass, and country-and-western tunes.

Sponsors for the December event are the Bear Hollow Trading Post and Naughty Nellie's Ice Cream Bar in Andover: "Whether it's ice cream or boots, it all comes from cows!" Sponsor contributions underwrite rental of the Grange Hall and support its renovation.

Doors to the Grange Hall open at 6 P.M. for food purchases offered by the Andover Congregational Church, and for open-mic sign-ins on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Looking ahead: On Friday, January 19, the Coffeehouse will feature

the Heather Pierson Acoustic Trio with a performance of vocals backed by multiple musical instruments: piano, banjo, melodica, ukulele, cornet, bass and acoustic guitar. Pierson's website explains: "From New Orleans-style jazz and blues to rousing Americana



Carl Beverly performs as part of the "Open Mic" portion of the Andover Coffeehouse in November. Photo: Steve Colardeau

and poignant folk narratives, Heather's memorable, intimate, and cathartic live performances ... feature her virtuosity on piano, her bell-tone vocals, and her commanding yet playful stage presence."

Looking back: The Coffeehouse offered its first event on Friday, January 16, 2015, with performances by Sunapee's Rich King and Andover's Sferes and White before a standing-room-only audience. Since that time, King, Jennifer White and Jimmy Sferes have been regular Coffeehouse supporters, taking on such activities as booking talent, acting as masters of ceremonies, managing equipment, handling logistics, and the like.

Other volunteers help with room arrangements, food preparation and sales, publicity, open-mic sign-ins, performance videotaping and photography,

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ing mill at East Andover in 1823"; their advertising shows that they were open for business there no later than mid-1821. They were also part-owners, with Robert Barber and David Dyer, of the sawmill there; and since Barber also had owned a carding, dyeing, and fulling mill there since 1817-18 and likely for years before, it is highly probable that John Bryant was working in Barber's cloth mill, and devising and testing his improvements there, no later than early 1817.

Our first glimpse of John Bryant's inventive handiwork comes from a letter printed in the Concord, MA Middlesex Gazette in late June 1818. (The letter was quickly reprinted in several other newspapers; regional interest in mechanical improvements of this sort was already running high.) A clothier from Dover, NH, Richard Gove, was writing to describe a new machine he had just seen in operation – "the Steel Spring Cloth dressing Machine recently invented by Mr. John J. Bryant of Andover, N. H." "The Machine is so admirably calculated," he noted admiringly, "that a piece of cloth by passing through it wet or dry, may be napped, shorn and brushed." Gove described a multi-stage process. First, the cloth was napped by a card that was cranked into position, pressed against the cloth by springs, and adjusted with a screw. Second, the cloth was napped by a rotating cylinder that bore the cloth up against a series of steel blades and sheared it between one of these and a fixed, opposed blade. During this stage, Gove claimed, Bryant's device "shears off the nap about twice as fast as the common twisted blade or ten times as fast as the hand shears." Finally, the cloth was "smoothed by a cylindrical brush." Moreover, "the machinery will all operate together, or any one of the parts may be used without the operation of the other." Gove celebrated it as "the first complete cloth dressing machine that has been invented."

The news of Bryant's invention soon attracted attention, not only from interested clothiers and mechanics but from equally interested competitors. In particular, an established Worcester inventor, William Hovey, quickly responded with a threat of legal action. The machinery as described in Gove's letter, Hovey declared in his newspaper notice, "exactly agrees" with a machine already invented in 1817 and patented earlier in 1818 by Hovey, Stuart, and Henderson; and that patent, he added, had already been defended and enforced in court against other would-be inventors. Accordingly, "Clothiers are cautioned from being deceived, as a suit will be commenced immediately against any one who shall make or use the above mentioned Machine [i.e. Bryant's] without the consent of the Subscriber [Hovey] or his agents." Hovey, of course, stood ready to supply them with machines of his own manufacture.

Hovey was a bona fide inventor and mechanic, with many accomplishments already to his name and others still to

come (he continued to receive patents occasionally into the 1840s). But he badly muddled the waters with this uninformed attack on Bryant. (He had not seen Bryant's machine first-hand; he was merely reading Gove's description of it and drawing his own conclusions.) He was not, in fact, the Hovey of the patent he was here defending: that patentee was Eleazer Hovey, probably his father, although the patent right now belonged to him. And that Hovey-Stewart (not Stuart)-Henderson invention had been patented not in June 1818, as Hovey said, but in June 1808 – a typo that remained uncorrected as his newspaper notice was repeated weekly for two full months. The error mattered because some of Bryant's acquaintances, reading Hovey's accusations, quickly spoke up in his defense to testify that they "saw Mr. Bryant whilst in the act of constructing or fixing a set of Shear blades on the cylindrical principle, and saw them after they were completed, prior to the time which Mr. Hovey states Hovey, Stuart and Henderson's machine was invented" – prior, that is, to the spring of 1817.

Young John Bryant, for his part, was forthright and cool in his own defense. While Hovey had not seen his invention, John had probably seen some version of the Hovey-Stewart-Henderson one, for that had made a truly important advance in cloth manufacture and was now being sold in several areas of New England and New York. He explained that the shearing blades of his invention "do not stand on the surface of a cylinder as [Hovey] says his does, but lie nearly flat," so that "the nap is not torn out by the root, but is literally cut or shorn smoothly from the cloth." In conclusion, he responded to Hovey's hint of legal action with a reliance on legal defense: "If Mr. Hovey is dissatisfied with what has been said, perhaps the better way to decide it will be that prescribed by the Patent Law, that is a jury of the country."

John Bryant had apparently entrusted his patent application to New Hampshire's newly elected (in 1817) Senator, David L. Morrill, for forwarding to the Patent Office in Washington, D.C. Gove had noted that "Mr. Bryant expects to receive a Patent on the return of the Hon. D. L. Morrill from the city of Washington." Bryant's patent for "Napping cloth, shearing and brushing" was issued on September 2, 1818. There were no more attacks from Hovey, although Hovey did continue to enforce his patents aggressively against other would-be competitors. On the other hand, Bryant does not seem to have created a demand for his own machines, and never went into the business of making them for and selling them to others, as had been his original hope.

Bryant clearly had a fine understanding of mechanics, and he quickly won the respect of his fellow townspeople. He was soon appointed one of the six founding directors of the new Noyes School, Andover's first public academy offering a true secondary education, and became

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