



The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

www.thompsonhistorical.org

Fall 2001

Calendar of Events

Planned membership meetings for the Society. All are welcome to attend the meetings at the Old Town Hall, 7 PM (unless otherwise stated).

Thursday, October 11, 2001

- Presentation by Ron Tillen on
Thompson Fire Department History

Thursday, October 18, 2001

- John Proctor will discuss letters from Henry Brown of E. Thompson to his father, Benjamin Brown during the Civil War.

Saturday, October 27, 2001

- Bus Trip to Lowell, MA to see mill museum & textile operation (see story)

Saturday, December 1, 2001

- Christmas Concert @ Old Town Hall

Thursday, April 4, 2002

- Membership meeting

Saturday, April 20, 2002

- Patriot's Day Celebration—day event

Thursday, May 2, 2002

- Membership meeting

Thursday, June 6, 2002

- Annual meeting & picnic

The following dates are for Board of Director meetings, to be held at the Ellen Larned Memorial Library at 7 PM (unless otherwise stated).

Thursday, September 20, 2001

Thursday, November 15, 2001

Thursday, January 17, 2002

Thursday, March 21, 2002

Thursday, April 18, 2002

Please note these meetings are for directors only. Members may attend to present issues or ideas by arrangement. Call Dave Babbitt @ 935-5196

Museum Shop

- Come see the new & exciting items for sale in our museum shop @ the Old Town Hall. We will be open from 10 am—2 pm on the following dates:

- Saturday, Oct. 6th

- Saturday, Nov. 3rd

- Saturday/Sunday, Nov. 24/25*

- Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 1/2*

- Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 8/9*

- Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 15/16*

- Saturday, Dec. 23*

(* open until 4 pm these days)

Inside this issue:

Calendar of Events 1

Membership News 1

THS Information 1

Back to School Photos 2

Walking Weekend 2

Trip to Lowell 3

Outhouse Story / Treasure Mystery 3

Book Sessions 3

Doane Estate / Wil-sonville Mill photos 4

Officers / Contact Info:

President: Dave Babbitt

Vice President: Joe Iamartino

Treasurer: Jeffrey Barske

Secretary: Jane Vercelli

Curator: Mark Savolis

Collections: Hattie Green

Photos: Alice Biesiadecki

Museum Shop: Val Iamartino

Website: Barbara Loy

For information, visit our website at:

www.thompsonhistorical.org

Or call 860-923-3200

Membership Changes Approved by Board

The THS Board & Membership, at the Annual Meeting, approved the changes proposed by the Membership Committee. These changes are:

- The membership committee has the responsibility for writing and mailing the newsletters, to be approved by the President, prior to mailing.
- The Summer newsletter will be mailed town wide to spur membership.

- Membership dues are:

\$10 Individual Membership

\$15 Family Membership

\$25+ Contributing Membership

\$5 Student Membership

- Dues to be paid by July 1st

- 1st reminder: Summer newsletter

- 2nd reminder: Fall newsletter



Back to School!

Students from the Thompson Hill School circa 1900s certainly paid attention to the photographer for this rare 'in-class' shot. This photograph was recently donated by Donald Peterson, from Brooklyn, CT.

Walking Weekend October 6-8

The Heritage Corridor's Walking Weekend has dozens of walks throughout our region. The Thompson Historical Society will sponsor two walks that weekend, October 6-8.

The first is the North Grosvenordale Mill Village Walk led by former First Selectman, James Sali. The walk will begin at the Lions Bandstand at 10 am October 6th and run about 2 hours.

The second walk will be at West Thompson Dam and will discuss the old village now under the waters of West Thompson Lake. This tour will be led by Alice Biesiadecki, a former resident of the lost village. The tour will start at the Army Corps of Engineering Garages at the west side of the dam at 1 pm on October 8th.



Back to School

In the late 1940s, Dean Laroche operated a bus service for Grosvenordale and North Grosvenordale mill workers. He also ran a leased bus service for the town of Thompson. Later, when the town bought another school bus, Dean sold his school bus to become a town bus driver.

According to Dave Babbitt, in those days, many people did not have cars for their weekend day trips. Dean would drive families to the beach or to the ball park in his bus or limousine.

The top photo shows the bus used for the mill worker commuters. The bottom photo is the school bus Dean owned and leased to the Thompson school system.

Thank you to Dean's wife, Connie, for donating these photos to the Thompson Historical Society.

Book Workshops Well Attended

Thanks to the work of dedicated chairpersons, the summer workshop meetings for our pictorial history book about the Villages of Thompson were well attended. The five meetings, held Wednesday evenings throughout the summer, brought a huge amount of material and valuable insights. The meetings, at times rocked with laughter from the anecdotes, were enjoyed by all.

Chairpersons:

- Peg Babbitt / Betty Leclair for Quinebaug and Fabyan
- Hattie Green / Sue Vincent for Thompson Hill / Quadric
- Dave Babbitt for the Grosvenor-

dales

- Barbara Weaver for East Thompson & Wilsonville
- Alice Biesiadecki for West Thompson & Mechanicsville (though ill, assisted by Jane Ellison)

In the coming months, we will be sorting the notes and photos into the book format. While we have a lot of new information, we still need stories & photos relating to the old Boston Turnpike that passed through East Thompson. Early homes & inns on that route are needed to fill out that section of the book. Call Joe @ 923 0151 if you can help in this area.

The Outhouse Project—Ken has done his duty

Hidden behind the Old Town Hall is our venerable outhouse. Thanks to the skill of Ken Goloski, & Jane Vercelli's grantwriting efforts, the outhouse has now been fully restored to its former "glory".



Treasure Mystery

Leslie Mills, a local historian, (died Dec. 9, 1978), wrote a mysterious note about three Revolutionary War soldiers detailed to carry payroll money between Boston & New York. The story states that by the time they reached Thompson, British soldiers were closing in and capture was inevitable. They quickly dug a hole, buried the chest of gold, and lit a fire to conceal the location.

One soldier was later killed and the other two were wounded and never returned. Legend has the site at or near the old Reich Farm, or a tavern on the old Woodward farm just next to the Reich Farm. Others said that it was behind "a Mr. Keegan's house where the breast-works of the British can still be seen."

Mr. Mills wrote that he was told that this story is on record in Washington. This is where the note ends.

Bus Trip to Lowell Mill & American Textile History Museum— October 27, 2001

Join us for a bus trip to the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, MA and Lowell's National Historic Park, Saturday, October 27, 2001. The 47 passenger bus will leave from the Louis P. Faucher Community Center promptly at 9 a.m., returning to Thompson by 5 p.m. The cost is \$20/member; \$25/non-members.

The tour features a display of fabric and period clothing at the museum, working models of looms and other machines used to make the cloth as well as a visit to the "Mill Girl's Boarding House" exhibit at the National Historic Park. The trip will give us an opportunity to revisit how our villages provided employment in the textile trade through the 1950s. Space is limited so don't delay. Call Dave Babbitt at 860 935 5196.

Museum Shop—Upcoming Items

Visitors to the museum shop find a wide variety of items of local historical interest. One of the most popular are the collectible wood buildings. Past buildings include the Old Town Hall, Pepin's Store & Post Office (Fabyan), The Ellen Larned Library, and the No. Gros-

venordale Gazebo. This year's collectible building is the original high school structure at Tourtellotte Memorial High School as it was circa 1912.

Also for sale will be the 2001 Thompson CD, containing documents & photos of Thompson's past. Look for both at the Museum Shop in November.

The Thompson Historical
Society

P.O. Box 47
Thompson, CT 06277

Phone: 860 923 3200

The John Doane Estate—Primrose

The photo below was recently donated by Donald Peterson, from Brooklyn, CT. It shows the John Doane estate as viewed from a hillock across Rt. 21 looking north-west. The house visible to the right is the Dresser Home, currently the site of the Tillen Family home. Barely visible in the background is Rt. 193. Both the Doane and Dresser buildings burned.

The Doane home, called Primrose, later became part of the Marot College also known as the Howe-Marot school, a prep school/ college for girls.

The entrance to Primrose sat at the junction of Rt. 21 and Rt. 193.

It is interesting to note that John Doane, a wealthy businessman, was a mentor to Norman B. Ream. It was during a visit to the Doane house that Ream grew to love the Thompson country-side and decided to establish his grand estate here. Ream's estate is now the site of Marianapolis School.

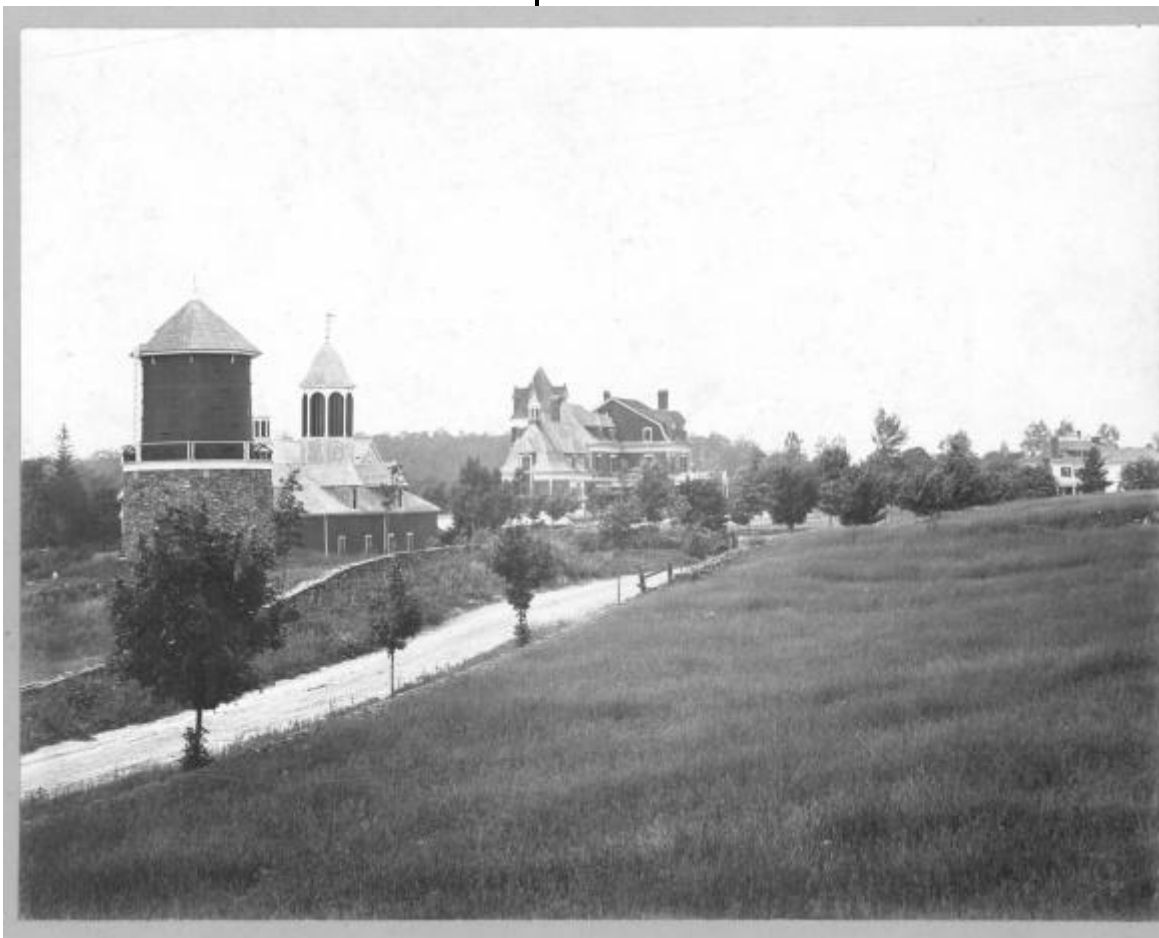


Photo courtesy of the Keegan Family

Wilsonville (Keegan) Mill

A recently donated photo of the Wilsonville Mill shows what is believed to be the site's original grist mill. The grist mill is the small dark structure at mid-right. The Keegan family believed that this 'cracker' building to be the site's oldest.

Membership Dues

*** REMINDER***

July 1st is the renewal date for membership dues. Thank you to all of you who have renewed. For those of you running late, please send dues in as soon as you can.

Don't forget to visit our website

www.thompsonhistorical.org