



The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

www.thompsonhistorical.org

Winter 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).

Friday, November 30, 2001

- Christmas Concert rehearsal, 6:30 PM @ the Old Town Hall

Saturday, December 1, 2001

- Christmas Concert @ Old Town Hall, 7PM
- Space may be limited. Bring a folding chair and a dessert to share. Museum shop open.

Thursday, April 4, 2002

- Membership meeting

Presentation: Native Americans in Thompson

Saturday, April 20, 2002

- Patriot's Day Celebration—day event at the Thompson Common

Thursday, May 2, 2002

- Membership meeting

We are looking for a presentation topic for this meeting. Suggestions please!

Thursday, June 6, 2002

- Annual meeting & picnic at Vincent home on County Home Rd.

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, 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—4 pm on the following dates:

- Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 1/2*

- Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 8/9*

- Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 15/16*

- Saturday, Dec. 22*

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Officers / Contact Info:

President: Dave Babbitt
 Vice President: Joe Iamartino
 Treasurer: Jeffrey Barske
 Secretary: Jane Vercelli
 Curator: Mark Savolis
 Collections: Hattie Greene
 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 Information

The Thompson Historical Society has 160 members located in 6 states. Many memberships are gifts from family members to relatives or for people from outside the town with past family connections to the region. Every year, the Society receives family history look-up inquiries, questions related to building pedigree, business tracking and available books on local history. Your dues support these services as well as the upkeep on the Larned Library & the Old Town Hall.

- 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

Vincent Family Restores Ramsdell Barn

West Thompson's Hezekiah Ramsdell farm, last occupied by Alice Ramsdell, was listed on the National Register of Historical Places. Following the decision by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to take the Ramsdell property along with many other West Thompson homes and businesses, Alice Ramsdell, after some "negotiating", was allowed to stay on her property until her passing.

In 1998, Sue and Rob Vincent learned that the Corps planned on destroying the buildings and offered to buy the earliest portion of the 1736 Cape and the barn. A deal was struck and the Vincents dismantled the structures and reassembled them on their County Home Road (Rt. 21) property in Thompson. As of this writing, the barn is almost completely restored. It is a monument to the Ramsdell family and to the Vincents who have invested so much to save the buildings.

Next June, the Society will have its annual meeting and picnic again at the Vincent property. Last year's picnic featured an Antique Roadshow-like appraiser and a meeting inside the Vincent barn. We hope that Thompson residents will recognize the Ramsdell barn and remember the stories behind the structure in the years to come. If any reader would like to tour the building, contact Sue at 923-5728.

Thanks to our Walking Weekend guides

The Heritage Corridor's Walking Weekend (October 6-8) worked out well for those attending, despite threatening weather. Our thanks to tour guides Alice Biesiadecki and Jim Sali for their fine tours. Dozens of people, many from out of town, enjoyed the local sites & lore.



Ramsdell Barn on the Vincent Property

Private Henry Brown: Letters Home 1861-1864

Last month, John Proctor presented a wonderfully prepared program to the Society about Henry Brown, a private in the U.S. Army during the Civil War. Mr. Proctor is descended from the Brown family, originally from East Thompson. Pvt. Brown left East Thompson in 1861, fought in many key battles and died of infection in a Philadelphia hospital in 1864.

The story is compelling because Private Brown's family kept many dozens of the letters he sent home. Mr. Proctor transcribed these letters into booklet form, which he presented to the Society and to the Thompson Library.

Here are two examples:

*Pvt. Henry Brown, Artillery
Carver Hospital, Wash., D.C., May 6, 1864*

Dear Parents, You will no doubt be surprised to

find that I am in the General Hospital in Washington but it is so. I was but 6 days in camp when I was taken with fever, AGUE. I have shook the flesh all off of my bones. I had dreadful pains in my bowels. They were so sore that I could not press them at all. They were pottiest several times which took the soreness out. I have not had the shakes so hard for a couple of days. Yesterday was the first day I have been out. Today, I thought I felt steady enough to write. I haven't eat scarcely anything till within a few days. I have took quinine for medicine. I took them all within a few days. I have about 20 big powders on hand and I think I am like to have suffered dreadfully but I think I shall get along now. I expect every day to be sent further North. I don't think of anymore to write. I wrote to you as soon as I got back to the battery. I have received no answer. Goodbye for this time, Henry Brown.

Letter to Pvt. Henry Brown at Satterlee Hospital, West Philadel-

phia, PA from his mother in E. Thompson, CT 10 May 1864

Dear Henry, We got a letter from you informing us you were sick in the hospital...How I wish I could take care you. Can't you get a furlough from the hospital and come home and stay till you get well? Father says he don't believe you will get over it unless you come north.

I was thinking about your being on the way from Richmond, feeling afraid you would get killed or wounded as many thousands have... My poor, poor boy...I feel dreadful bad. It seems as though I must do something for you, but you are not near enough. Father is going to start tomorrow morning. How I wish I could go but I am not well enough to go and carry the baby and I could not leave her. She is so small. ...Poor child, how much you have suffered. The fever and ague is dreadful bad.... Goodbye Henry. From your affectionate Mother, Mary Brown.



West Thompson Village Remembered

In October, The Thompson Historical Society and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dedicated a collaborative 6-panel permanent historical exhibit at West Thompson Lake.

The panels were created by West Thompson's Alice Biesiadecki, a member of the Society, and West Thompson Lake Park Supervisor, Catherine M. Higgins. Together, they condensed a mountain of information into two—3 panel themes.

The first theme is the history of West Thompson village. In three panels, one can trace the evolution of the village from settlement through its development into a typical New England textile mill village with the changes brought about by religion, commerce and transportation. The second theme is an explanation of the three storms that caused massive re-

gional flooding and the government flood control work that followed, resulting in the dam and lake we see today at West Thompson.

Emile Breault, a resident of West Thompson and a Society member, spent many hours constructing the kiosk from materials native to West Thompson. His donation of time,

design, materials and effort is much appreciated.

Many thanks to the other contributors: Dave Babbitt, Jane & Peter Vercelli, John Lengel, Lynne Thibeault, Lucille Barrette, Julie Rheault and the Virtual Ad Agency and Bob Hanacek from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



Pictorial History of Thompson—Update

This past summer, the Society & the Thompson Recreation Department sponsored village meetings to collect ideas for the upcoming pictorial history book on Thompson's villages. The meetings were lively and informative and much information was garnered. The ideas have now been passed to Barbara Loy who will create a running index for the book. This index will contain all of the ideas that potentially could be in the book. Exactly how many of these ideas will be included in the book will be determined when the book format is decided upon at the January 2002 board meeting.

Publishing and funding options will be reviewed at the upcoming board meeting. We look forward to a final decision on the book size, page count and paper quality from this meeting.

The Thompson Historical Society Museum Shop Is Having Its Annual Holiday Fair.....

OPEN 10- 4pm: Sat Nov. 24—Hot Cider & refreshments served
Sun. Nov 25; Sat/Sun—Dec 1/2; Dec 8/9; Dec 15/16; Sat Dec 22

We have many unique gifts to give or to keep

- Our 2002 Thompson Calendar for \$6 each
- Vol III Thompson History CD— \$20 each
- Thompson Wooden buildings painted by local artist Charlotte Trahan; includes Cong. Church, Old Town Hall, Larned Library, Pepin's General Store, Vernon Stiles Inn, The Gazebo, and this year's feature—Tourtellotte Memorial High School
- Spires of Thompson Tapestry Pillow
- St Joseph & Sacred Heart Church picture prints
- Local items: honey, maple sugar, homemade soap, bird feeders, wood crafted items, ornaments & gift baskets galore
- Artist Tom Menard's painting "North Grosvenordale" will be premiering. Prints available for purchase.
- Most items already packaged for gift giving
- Our Kids & Teachers Corner has wonderful items available
- Door Prize—**Heirloom Rocking Horse**, to be drawn Sat., Dec. 22nd
- Remember to "Take a Tag for Tots & Teens" from our Holiday Gift-Giving Tree, a Christmas program to bring a little cheer to children.



SOCONY Gasoline stand on Main Street in North Grosvenordale, 1909— there is a small sign that says “Call Bell” and nearby there is a price of 29 cents (per gallon) for the gasoline



Textile Workers Union Christmas party for children, 1945, at Salle Union, Main St., No. Grosvenordale. “Union Hall” was the town’s theatre and was running “The Girl of the Limber Lost”.



James Maitland & Arthur Bourbeau at Quinebaug Shell Service Station— early 1960s?
Donated by Mary Maitland



Mystery: The faded photo at left has Schoolhouse Pond schoolchildren posing with an American flag and a banner with the letters S.S.L. We don't know what the S.S.L. letters represent.....Spirit of St. Louis? The photo is from 1916 so Spirit of St. Louis isn't chronologically right for the 1927 Lindberg plane. Any ideas?

Ideas for newsletter: Every month, we receive questions on different aspects of Thompson history. Many of the questions are quite enlightening. Beginning with this issue, we'll print the questions and answers for as many as we can find room to include. See back page for questions and answers.

Saving old photos and documents:

We are receiving excellent additions to our photo & document electronic archive. With the advent of digital scanners, we can scan your photo or document and return the original to you while you wait. If you have one-of-a-kind material you want to preserve, call 860 923 0151 for an appointment.

The **Thompson Historical Society**
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Below: Joe Langelier's Gas & Service Station on Rt. 12 in No. Grosvenordale, 1956. This is currently the site of the Cumberland Farms Store & Gas Station. Photo donated by Joseph Langelier



Above: Diselets Station with house addition in rear, c1940s, located on Rt. 12 Grosvenordale, near intersection of Klondike Street - thanks to Josie Duquette for locating photo



Ask the Society— Questions on Thompson History

Q. When did the Marianapolis School begin in Thompson?

A. According to Rev. John Petrauskas, writing in his 1992 article for the Lithuanian Journal of Arts & Sciences, the school officially opened in 1931 on the grounds of the former Ream Mansion. Go to www.lituanus.org/1992_3/92_3_01.htm for more information on the school history.

Q. Did George Washington ever spend a night in Thompson?

A. Not that we know of. However, his journal has a note that he once stopped at Jacobs' Inn in East Thompson for breakfast. Unfortunately, the note also indicates that the meal was not very good. Route 193 & East Thompson Road together were part of the turnpike road to Boston and carried many well-known people through Thompson.