

# Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

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January 2013

## Board of Directors

Meetings are held at the Thompson Library, starting at 7 pm:

3/6/13, Room 3

5/8/13, Room 3

## In this issue:

- ◆ Society News 1
- ◆ Membership
- ◆ 2013 BOD Info
- ◆ KHS Tidbits

- ◆ President's Quill 2
- ◆ KHS Tidbits

- ◆ N. Grosvenordale 3
- Train Wreck: 1910

- ◆ 1910 Train Wreck 4
- Continued
- ◆ Q&A

- ◆ Mark Twain's 5
- travels through
- Fabyan/Quinebaug

- ◆ Aaron White's 6
- Coin
- ◆ Sagerock Farm

- ◆ High Street ? 7
- ◆ Devil Rum!
- ◆ More Q&A!

- ◆ Q&A! 8

## Society News



### THS Board Information for Year Ending June 2013:

#### Officers:

Joe Iamartino (President)  
Burton Rhodes (Vice President)  
Sue Vincent (Treasurer)  
Mark Snay (Secretary)

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#### Administrative:

Mark Snay (Curator)  
Joe Iamartino (Digital Archives)  
JoAnn Witkowski-Thorstenson  
(Newsletter)

#### Committees:

Dave Babbitt (Events)  
JoAnn Witkowski-Thorstenson  
(Membership)  
Sue Vincent (Museum Shop)  
Lucille Barrett (Museum Shop)  
Burton Rhodes (Nominating)

## Membership/Dues Information:

Members can find their paid status on the address sticker of this newsletter. (Membership runs on the THS fiscal year; July 1-June 30.)

### Thompson Historical Society

Attn: Membership

P.O. Box 47

Thompson, CT 06277

**Contributing Membership: \$25.00**

**Individual Membership: \$10.00**

**Family Membership: \$15.00**

Members are invited to purchase first-year memberships for new members for \$5.00.

## In This Issue

Our good friends at the Killingly Historical Society have been providing us with "tidbits" of Thompson history gleaned from *The Dayville Sunbeam*, the *Windham County Transcript*, and other sources.

This issue of the THS Newsletter contains a myriad of tidbits which we hope you find as interesting as we do.

The history between Killingly and Thompson is very interesting. The internet, and reference materials such as *Echoes of Old Thompson Volumes I & II*, offer an insight into our early relationship, eventual annex, and incorporation in 1785.

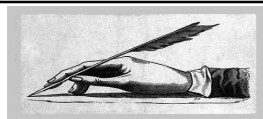
In addition to our very own THS website, we offer the *Windham County, CT., Genealogy and History* site at:

[www.connecticutgenealogy.com/windham/thompson.htm](http://www.connecticutgenealogy.com/windham/thompson.htm)

Please copy and paste into your browser.

THS Contact info: [jiamartino@charter.net](mailto:jiamartino@charter.net)—860.923.3776

## President's Quill ~ Joe Iamartino



Friends, when I woke up the day after the end of all time according to the Maya, I realized that either nothing happened or heaven looks a lot like Thompson CT. I am a winner either way.

Every month or so, I will get a box of books, photos, paintings, magazines, letters or items donated to our museum. While every donation is greatly appreciated, there are many ways that these items are valuable to our Society. Value is rarely financial though. We crave the rare letter with new historical information, that old handmade tool or arrowhead found in a Thompson swamp. Here's a partial list of desirable items:

- ◆ Items written/painted/made by (or sent to a person from) Thompson - ex. book, diary, letter, account book, pen and ink sketch, post card.
- ◆ Something commercially printed, used in Thompson - ex. a pew record, a map, a school text book, newspaper, catalog.
- ◆ Artifacts known to be used in 'ye olde Thompson' or found in town- ex. a rug beater, old crock, sewing kit, banjo clock, bee box, spear head. Think.... "Who, what, where, when and how."
- ◆ Photos of person, places or things in or from Thompson, and especially interesting if there is some identification.

The challenge comes when we deal with something commonly used in Thompson such as the book "Tom Sawyer," a 1920s piano or a 1969 RCA television set. Certainly many from town read Tom Sawyer, played a similar piano or watched such a TV. While we'd like to have one of everything, there isn't space enough or time to preserve everything. Yet, these items might still help. Donors have allowed us to sell certain items to raise funds to preserve the Old Town Hall for example. As the Society is a 501c3 organization, some artifact donations and even donations of services are tax deductible. Lastly, donations do not have to be permanent. Old letters and photos can be scanned into our digital

collection and the originals returned.

Paintings and artifacts can be photographed too. The photograph of great grandpa (with his homemade bicycle) in the shoebox may be the only one in existence. That daguerreotype of an old woman in a shawl from 1865 could be the only photograph of her 85 year existence on this planet. Our Society's effort to catalog our collection and put items on our website could help you better understand your family history or help someone in San Francisco too with their family search. The discovery of that missing "gem" of family info is priceless. Helping folks find these gems is the reward for the work we do.

May you all have a wonderful new year. Thank you for your continued support! We certainly appreciate the shoppers who stopped by the museum shop, as well as the great effort by the shop volunteers again this year.

P.S.: To the people who asked me for book recommendations:

- ◆ For the early Thompson colonial history, read Ellen Larned's History of Windham County (available at the Thompson Library and for sale by THS).
- ◆ For an understanding of New England's lithic past, read Manitou by Mavor & Dix.
- ◆ For a pre-Columbian look at the Americas, try 1491 by Charles C. Mann. A visit to the recently updated [www.neara.org](http://www.neara.org) website might help folks trying to connect lithic interests with pre-colonial American Indians interests.
- ◆ For a great explanation of the causes of King Philip's War (1675) in a readable text, consider Mayflower by Nathaniel Philbrick. His "Notes" at the end of the text will point readers to all of the major texts on the subject.

~ Joe Iamartino

*From the archives of the Killingly  
Historical Society,  
Windham County Transcript articles  
from the past.  
Supplied by our friend Marilyn Labbe*

### ~21 April 1910~

Through the efforts of the Grosvenordale Company and under the direction of the agent, C.S. Andem, the villages of Grosvenordale are to be supplied with water for all domestic uses by a water system, now in the process of installation. The water will be brought from a spring at Grosvenordale to two 1,600 gallon standpipes. This will furnish water for all the tenements owned by the mill company, and other people along the main highway who desire can be accommodated.

### ~10 November 1910~

The new water system that has been in course of construction at N. Grosvenordale since last spring has been practically completed. The cost is about \$30,000. The system consists of two electric pumps of five horsepower capacity each, and 125,000 gallon capacity tanks, located on the high ground in the rear of the Tourtellotte High School. The water is pumped from the crystal clear springs located 110 feet below the level of the tanks. The new system supplied water to the mill of the Grosvenordale Co., and to 500 persons, most of whom live in company owned houses. It is also to be used in providing the village with protection against fire. The system will probably be extended later by laying more lines of pipe.

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*Train Wreck of 1910 - North Grosvenordale*  
(not to be confused with the Great East Thompson Train Wreck of 1891)

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*From the Windham County Transcript*

*~29 December 1910~*

Bad Freight Wreck. Engineer Killed and Trainmen Injured in Smash at North Grosvenordale.

Nearly a dozen freight cars and a big locomotive weighing many tons were piled into a heap of twisted steel and splintered wood, in one of the worst wrecks that the Norwich branch of the Midland Division has known in fifteen years, when the East Hartford freight, running at about 45 miles an hour, rammed into seven freight cars which had been left on the main line in front of N. Grosvenordale station, on Thursday evening, December 22, at about 6:30 o'clock. Charles Tufts, engineer of the fast freight, met death beneath his engine, after faithfully staying at his post. Fireman John E. Murphy of Putnam was badly cut about his head, while brakeman James B. Peters of Charlestown, Mass. sustained a broken kneecap.

The blame for the wreck is said to have been caused by the negligence of the flagman, Joseph Mahan, of Webster, who had been on the road only a short time and was not thoroughly acquainted with all the details of his work. Mahan is 23 years of age, and was quite unstrung after the occurrence, and explained how it happened that he was not at his station. In a talk with a reporter soon after the accident, Mahan is credited as saying:

*"They never told me a thing about going out on the main track at N. Grosvenordale, and I remained in the caboose, because I thought the train was on a siding. I wasn't asleep, but I always got orders as to what to do when we stopped, and I wasn't given any instructions this time, so I thought everything was all right. After the smash, our engineer, Lavigne, came to the caboose and said that I had caused the wreck, and to get out with my flag and flag any train that might come along. I went out, and until 8 o'clock stayed at my post. Then some of the trainmen came to me and said I was a fool to stay, as the others had cleared out."*

Upon arrival of the wreckers, work began at once to clear the line. The wrecked cars were pulled from the track and swung to either side. Great fires were started,

in order to burn the great piles of wreckage and whole sides of freight cars were placed on the burning piles. The wreckers arrived about midnight and by 4 o'clock a clear track had been made with only one train delayed, which was the boat train from Worcester, sent around from Webster to East Thompson, arriving in Putnam nearly two hours late.

Fireman John Murphy, who was injured in the railroad wreck at N. Grosvenordale Thursday night, is a brother-in-law of John Kennedy of Danielson.

Wrecking crews worked all day on Sunday, clearing away the rubbish at N. Grosvenordale. Many from this vicinity spent the day watching the workmen clearing away the debris.

It was reported that the wreckers failed to get the large freight engine out of the mud at N. Grosvenordale, and that a spur track will be built down to it by which to haul it out of the river.

The task of getting locomotive No. 414 out of the river at N. Grosvenordale has proved to be a very difficult one for the wrecking crews, but on Tuesday evening the big machine had been hauled up near to the tracks. Mammoth chains snapped like straw when the pressure of the big steam wreckers was exerted on the stranded machine. The big locomotive was picked out of the river, where it had lain since Thursday night.

*~5 January 1911~*

The freight wreck at N. Grosvenordale has been cleared up about as much as will ever be done and little remains to tell of the accident except the ashes and bits of charred wood and a few splinters where the freight cars were burned. All the damaged freight cars were taken to E. Hartford Friday and there were over a dozen in the lot. Some of the cars were filled with wreckage and the steel car which went down the banking with the engine was piled into another car. There was an alarming slant to several of the box cars and when the train went around some of the curves it must have been "everybody lean." An engine which was out of repair was in the train and being towed to the shops at E. Hartford with the damaged cars.

*Continued next page...*

*Train Wreck of 1910 - North Grosvenordale (cont.)*

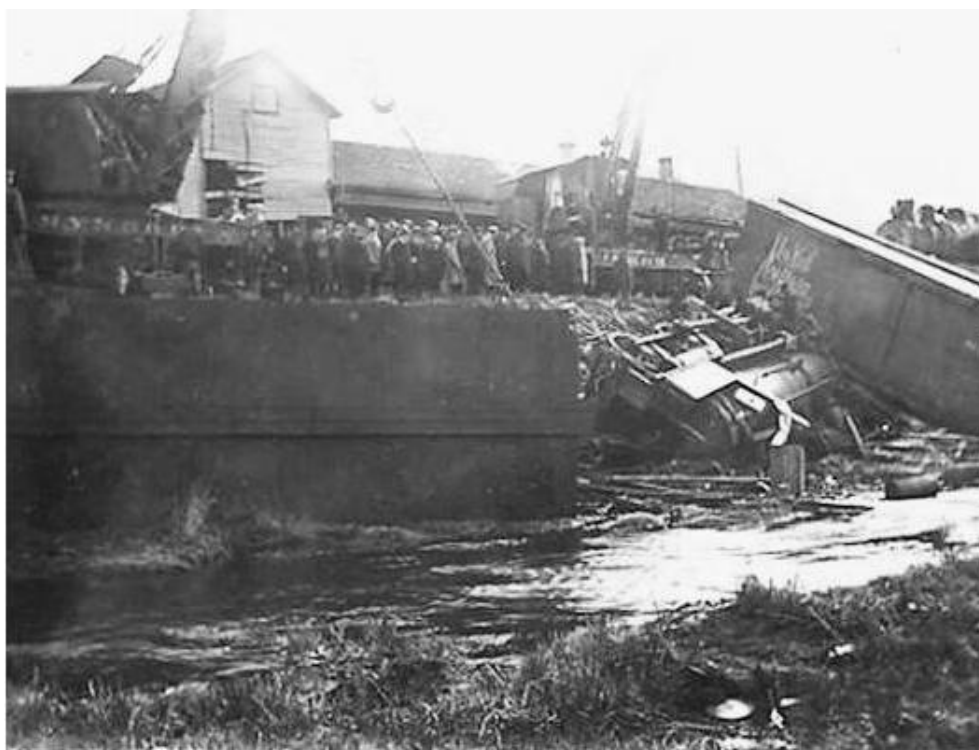
*From the Windham County Transcript*

*~12 January 1911~*

Fireman John Murphy, who went down with the locomotive in which his engineer, Charles E. Tufts, was killed in the N. Grosvenordale wreck, was discharged from the Day Kimball Hospital. He is to go to his home in Providence. Murphy's head is swathed in bandages that cover wounds of severity, but he gets about as actively as ever, and will be as well as ever in a short time. Brakeman Peters remains at the hospital, his injured knee mending gradually.

*~11 May 1911~*

Locomotive No. 414, the mogul that went into the river at N. Grosvenordale in the wreck in which Engineer Charles Tufts lost his life, is again in service. It was a badly smashed machine when the wreckers got it back on the rails, but it looks as good as new today.



*Photo and text from the THS Summer 2003 Newsletter:* Charlie Seney helped identify this 1910 train wreck photo in Thompson, at North Grosvenordale. Charlie had previously donated a 1938 photo of the train station in N. Grosvenordale which helped us to identify this photo. The station is seen behind the crowd.

Please be sure to visit the THS website often and check out older Newsletters! The 1910 wreck is mentioned in Summer 2003 and Spring 2006.

<http://www.thompsonhistorical.org/Newsletters.htm>



*Q&A:*

Thompson had 'stationed' state troopers at different times, as well as constables. Of course, sheriffs existed from the earliest days of Windham County.

This badge was found in a recent move from a house in the 'lots' section of N. Grosvenordale.

Does anyone have any information regarding a regular police force in town?

*The Thompson Historical Society* members generously volunteer their time and energies for the many tasks that keep the organization operating smoothly. As we progress through the new year many existing volunteer opportunities and as well as several new activities remain available.

If you would like to sign up, or request additional information, or offer any special skills you possess to The Thompson Historical Society volunteer effort, please email the [Thompson Historical Society](mailto:Thompson Historical Society) or call 860-923-3776.

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*Mark Twain's Route to Boston through Fabyan/Quinebaug, 1874*

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As we mentioned in previous newsletters, it is always interesting when noted persons come to Thompson, Mark Snay, *that internet sleuth*, has found this one...

One such visit was by Mark Twain when in 1874, he decided to walk from his home in Hartford to Boston along the old stagecoach road with a friend, Mr. Twichell. This road passed through the Fabyan / Quinebaug section of Thompson along the current Route 197. Mark finally decided to abandon the walk, jump on a train at New Boston and get to Boston that way. The note below describes the arrival in Boston....

*One night, while we were giving a party, he (Mark Twain) suddenly stormed in with a friend of his and mine, Mr. Twichell, and immediately began to eat and drink of our supper, for they had come straight to our house from walking to Boston, or so great a part of the way as to be ahungered and athirst. I can see him now as he stood up in the midst of our friends, with his head thrown back, and in his hand a dish of those scalloped oysters without which no party in Cambridge was really a party, exulting in the tale of his adventure, which had abounded in the most original characters and amusing incidents at every mile of their progress. They had broken their journey with a night's rest, and they had helped themselves lavishly out by rail in the last half; but still it had been a mighty walk to do in two days. ([Howells 1968](#), 284)*

*In his journal, Twichell explained that "in Ashford early on the morning of Friday, 13 November, it became evident that our pedestrianism was about over, from the fact that Mark was exceedingly lame, but most conclusively from the fact that he had not slept at all, owing to the tea he drank at supper. However we got away from the tavern at 6½—a bitter cold morning—and made the 6 miles to North Ashford rather slowly, and there surrendered. There was no use in keeping it up." ([Twichell](#), 1:16)*

*In North Ashford, about thirty-five miles from Hartford, they stopped at another tavern. Twichell chatted with the proprietor, C. M. Brooks, a fellow Yale graduate and formerly "a New York lawyer stranded by strange circumstances on those forlorn hills."*

*Mark went to bed to try for a nap. I told our host who he was, and who we were, and then he wanted to have us go in and see his lately paralyzed wife which we did for about 5 m, but then retreated, the lady being quite unable to converse and looking "gashly." But we were very sorry for both of them. . . .*

*At 12 o'clock we started from N. Ashford for New Boston to take the cars, Mr. Brooks driving us in a narrow seated buggy behind the slowest horse I ever saw. It was a very cold tedious ride of 10 m. and we suffered the acutest hardship of the whole trip in taking it. Mr. Brooks wouldn't accept a cent of pay for his part of the service done us, and would take but \$3.00 for the man who owned the horse. ([Twichell](#), 1:16–18)*

<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL01167.xml;query=:searchAll=:sectionType1=:sectionType2=:sectionType3=:sectionType4=:sectionType5=:style=letter;brand=mtp> (Please copy and paste into your browser if link does not work.)

Howells, William Dean. *Literary Friends and Acquaintance: A Personal Retrospect of American Authorship* Edited by David F. Hiatt and Edwin H. Cady. vol. 32. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Twichell, Joseph H. "Personal Journal." MS of twelve volumes, Joseph H. Twichell Collection, CtY-BR. [bib10615].

Aaron White's Coin

As Joe relayed to this editor, another reminder to help us understand that our current poor economic situation is not the first. This image and story was found on a coin selling website.

Aaron White was an eccentric lawyer from New Boston, CT (now Fabyan/Quinebaug) who was well-known as an advocate of hard money and an outspoken critic of paper money. In 1863 he created "satirical" dollars (HK-829, 830, and 831) that featured overfed sows and the legend NEVER KEEP A PAPER DOLLAR IN YOUR POCKET TILL TOMORROW. He was also a hoarder who managed to accumulate some 140,000 or so coins, a figure that included 350 gold coins and 250 colonial pieces--imagine how much fun it would have been to get a peek at that hoard knowing what you know today! More details concerning White can be found in Dave Bowers' *American Coin Treasures and Hoards*.



40 mm. obverse with perpetual calendar and important dates in U.S. history, reverse with multiplication table and natus-obit dates for Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, and Lafayette. Bright orange-gold reflective surfaces come to life in a bright light source.



A Winter Scene from the past at Sagerock Farm

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*High Street? 1940 Census Question.*

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**January 2013, Kenneth Bove wrote:**

*"I found some of my relatives in the 1940 census who lived on High Street in North Grosvenordale. High Street seems to have intersected with Buckley Hill Road and is not found on maps today, so the name must have changed. Do you have any idea what happened?"*

**From our Researcher, Mark Snay:**

*Ken was researching relatives in the 1940 census and found a reference to Joseph LaFontaine having lived on High St. in North Grosvenordale, somewhere adjacent to Buckley Hill Road. Unable to find High St. on a map, he asked if we knew where it was. We questioned Charlie Seney and he said he had not heard of the street. He did remember Joseph LaFontaine and stated he lived across from what is now LB's Restaurant. Neighbors to Joe listed on the census confirmed that this is the correct location, so Rt. 12 was referred to as High St. by the census taker."*

**From THS:**

*It was not uncommon for a road to hold multiple names prior to the 'Street Sign' era, and the modern Post Office, pre-WWII. Also, In Britain and sections of Ireland, High Street is the same as the 'Main Street' of the United States. Riverside Drive (Rt. 12) is today our main commercial street. Since the old road ran in a valley, it was not high in altitude so the commercial sense was probably what was meant.*

**While researching articles for this newsletter, we came upon this 1874 book by Frank White mentioning Linehouse Road; selected excerpts below. Printed at the Journal Book and Job Office, Southbridge.**

We think the Town of Thompson is in a bad moral condition. It ought to improve yet it does not, but seems to retrograde daily...

"We must crush out rum by crushing the rum-seller," said another, for who can wonder at the bad condition of morality in many of our people, when such places as the *Line House*, the Chaffee Stand and Barnes' Tavern, besides many others not so noted perhaps, yet actually worse, are allowed by us to be kept open for the sale of intoxicating liquor at all times, Sundays not excepted. Then there is that miserable scamp, Henry Beebee, we all know the character of his house. That pack kept by Childs as well. It has an aristocratic name, Long Branch, humph; it would be more appropriately named Hell Branch! I say all these places are an inexpressible disgrace to the town of Thompson, and we ought to do something to crush them."

<http://cslib.cdmhost.com/cdm/singleitem/collection/p4005coll11/id/505/rec/8>

*Q & A—Dr. William Frederick Mead*

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**Q:** From Mr. James McConville, Centerville, Iowa;

I have some historical memorabilia regarding a **Dr. William Frederick Mead** and was wondering if you had any information or interest? He was born in 1847, a young Civil War Veteran courier from Boston. Graduated from Dartmouth in 1885. Records reflect he was licensed in CT, July 7, 1897. Licensed to perform general practice in Thompson, CT, also July 7, 1897.

I have his license, certification, and Civil War courier case framed. Any interest or information would be appreciated.

**Friends:** Mr. McConville later sent us the license, certification and brass Civil War courier case in a beautiful frame. It is another example of someone donating a treasured historical artifact to the society. If anyone has more information on Dr. Mead, please contact THS directors Joe Lindley or Joe Iamartino.

The Thompson Historical Society  
P.O. Box 47  
Thompson, CT 06277  
[www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)  
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**Q** *Why did the Roosevelts move to Thompson, CT? Did she continue to pursue art while living in Thompson? “Heidi” Lange Roosevelt.*

My name is Gary Tetley and I am an architect and historic researcher in St. Louis, MO. I am currently studying the work and career of a St. Louis architect and artist named Adelheid (Heidi) F. Lange. She was born in 1878 and married Andre' Roosevelt in 1905. She practiced architecture in St. Louis until they moved to Paris, France in 1912 where she started sculpting. She became very involved in the cubist movement in French art at the time and had several shows. Sometime around the First World War Andre' and Heidi left Paris and moved to Thompson, Conn. I believe she lived there with her daughter (Leila Roosevelt Denis) and family until she died in 1962. I believe her granddaughter, Heidi Denis Saffel donated her memoirs to the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian.

My question is, did she practice architecture or sculpt while she lived in Thompson? If so could you provide any information about her projects. Also, do you know if she has any family left in Thompson and if so could I contact them? Thank you for any information you can provide,

Gary R. Tetley, AIA, Manchester, MO

**Editor's note:** An image and further information on Adelheid Roosevelt can be found at the **Archives of American Art** website: <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/adelheid-lange-roosevelt-papers-9211>

*(Please copy and paste into your browser if link does not work.)*

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**THS Contact info:** [www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org); email: [jjamartino@charter.net](mailto:jjamartino@charter.net)—860.923.3776