

# Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

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September 2010

## Calendar of Events:

### Board of Directors Meetings

will be held at the Library, Community Room 3, 7 pm on the following dates:

10/27/10      1/26/11  
11/30/10      3/2/11  
                    4/19/11

*Annual Meeting/Picnic*

6/2/11, 7 pm, Location: TBD

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## Upcoming Events

**On October 9, 2010**, Dave Babbitt will lead a tour of the **North Grosvenordale Mill** area, including the villages where mill workers lived since production commenced in the 1800s. This easy 1 hour walk begins at the Lions' Bandstand in Riverside Park, starting at **10 am**.

On **Thompson Hill**, Joe Iamartino will lead a tour around the historic district surrounding the picturesque Thompson Common. The 1842 Old Town Hall and the Thompson Museum housed in the 1902 Larned Memorial Building will be open for display. Ron Tillen will present a 20-minute talk on Old Thompson inside the Old Town Hall starting at **1 pm** prior to the start of the walk.

**The Civil War** exhibit at the Larned Building opens Walking Weekend, **10-2**. The year 2011 begins the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of our nation's Civil War.

## Thompson Historical Society Information

**President:** Joe Iamartino  
**Vice President:** Burton Rhodes  
**Treasurer:** Susan Vincent  
**Secretary:** Mark Snay  
**Curator:** Joe Iamartino  
**Photos:** Mark Snay  
**Website:** Blair Cole  
**Buildings Admin.:** Gregg Aubin  
**Newsletter:** JoAnn Thorstenson

**Museum Shop:** Lucille Barrette, Helen Flood, Henrietta Panu, Kiku Anderson, June Schoppe, Sue Vincent, Lisa Reinholdsten

## The Man in the Net, 10/14/10 - 7:00 pm Thompson Library, Community Room 2

In 1958, this movie was filmed in Thompson, featuring Alan Ladd and Carolyn Jones, and directed by Michael Curtiz. Released in 1959, Thompson was renamed "Stoneville" in the movie. Many Thompson sites were filmed and local actors filled the chase scenes. See the movie and talk with local movie celebrity Clarence Ballard who played the deputy in the film! Event is jointly sponsored by the Thompson Recreation Dept.



## Local Airmen at War, 11/11/10, Veterans Day TMHS Ryscavage Auditorium

**6:30 pm: Mrs. H.A. Tourtellotte Memorial Room will be open for viewing prior to:  
7:00-8:30 Presentation in Auditorium**

The stories of prominent men who lived in this area and volunteered to be aviators in WWI and WWII. You probably know some of them, but you may be surprised to know what they did! Join us as Ron Tillen brings his unique views to his talk.



## President's Quill

Joe Iamartino



Around the beginning of summer, I received a call from The Last Green Valley (TLGV) telling me to expect a check in the mail soon, a TLGV donation. Pleasantly surprised as you might expect, I was then told that TLGV had chosen as their Volunteers of the Year, Thompson's Dave and Peg Babbitt. They were the ones who had directed the donation to the Historical Society.

I could write about all of the organizations they serve or support, but the paper isn't long enough. Community service seems so natural for this couple. One annual event, in particular, the lighting of the Tree of Life for our local Hospice organization, reminds me how special the Babbitts are to our community.

Each year, my mother-in-law Shirley Houle asks David to lead the ceremony. Each year, it is David who brings forward another grieving family to light the tree. Then, he leads the audience in the singing of holiday songs, and in his voice and mannerisms, he somehow transforms everyone's thoughts to the positive and uplifting spirit of Christmas seasons past and present. Finishing the songs, he invites everyone to dive into the cookies, cakes and cocoa.....and somehow, the event then takes on the emotional closing scenes of Frank Capra's "It's a Wonderful Life."

From time to time, I receive an email or call from Peg, suggesting I look into such and such opportunity. Invariably, her suggestions turn into positive actions for the betterment of the community, our Society or some other organization. When Peg suggests something, I listen!

I don't mean to embarrass them with this short tribute. I only wanted to express my gratitude for all they do for our community. Joe Iamartino

*(Please see excerpt of TLGV letter on page 5.)*

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## Update on Thompson Quoin Homes

As promised in the March 2010 newsletter, we have located 4 quoin homes that we believe with a high level of confidence to be Randall homes. The Ellen Larned house on the Common, Route 193; The Eddy home on the corner of O'Leary and Quaddick Roads; The old Hallie Bennett house, on Quaddick Road; and lastly, the home called Pincroft, across from the former Sacred Heart church in West Thompson. There are other candidates and the research continues.

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## Local Celebrations!

**18 December 1889**

*A very enjoyable company met at the residence of Dyer Elliott, Saturday, Dec. 7th, the occasion being the birthday of the proprietor, who was 92 years old, he at that advanced age being in good health and strength, his mind as keen and bright as that of any man in his prime. He lives on the old homestead built by his father and grandfather; part of a house built by his father is yet on the premises and in constant use. His wife was Eliza Green, who died five years ago at a ripe old age, and a member of one the old Thompson families. Of the Green family, one sister is Mrs. Phebe Bixby of Thompson, another is Mrs. Harriet Lyon of Woodstock. A brother is Marquis Green of Woodstock. John J. Green, who recently died in Putnam at the advanced age of ninety years was a brother. This birthday meeting was one of a series which occur as regularly as the birthdays occur among these aged people; they are connections, and will probably continue so long as any of the family are living to enjoy them.*

**19 March 1890**

*The children of W. Hilton Ballard gathered at his residence on Saturday, March 8, to assist him in celebrating his ninetieth birthday. The old gentleman, although nearly blind and deaf, is still hale and hearty and mentally as strong as ever.*

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

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📖 A question came in about old hand tools and if there was a society or group that might exist that cared about the creation and use of such tools.

📧 Yes, contact: The Early American Industries Association, 508-993-9578 / [www.eaiainfo.org](http://www.eaiainfo.org).

*The Model T and Me - Courtesy of Mr. Wally Brodeur*

It would be unusual if some photograph of N. Grosvenordale didn't trigger some memorable experience. The photo of Main Street on page 3 of the June issue of the THS Newsletter did just that. For it was on that very spot in front of Blanchette's barber shop that a Model T Ford and I collided.

The elementary school was just up the street on the left and in those days it was customary to go home for lunch. For me, it meant a lot of running because I lived up on Buckley Hill. So I would be running when I reached the Main Street, cross the road at the barber shop and continue past the post office, Douville's ice cream parlor, Johnson's store, and Paradis' stores, across the bridge at the Hose House and eventually through Rawson's cow pasture to arrive home with plenty of time to eat and repeat the run back to school.

Traffic was usually light at that intersection and I carelessly looked in only one direction before dashing out directly in front of Mr. Converse's milk truck. I remember seeing that crank that hung down below the radiator on all Model T Fords and it was right beside me as I went down. The next thing I was conscious of was being on the sidewalk and running. I was scared, knowing that I had done something stupid worthy of a good scolding, to say the least. Mr. Converse was our milkman so he immediately started off in pursuit, concerned that I might be injured. I was in the house by the time he knocked on the door and, of course, he spilled the beans to Ma. They both determined that obviously I hadn't suffered injury. I look back on the experience with some surprise that it still seems real in my memory and thankful that cars traveled slower 80 years ago.

August 15, 2010

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*Larned Family Papers in PA**Membership/Dues Information:*

Recently, Sue Vincent found a trove of Thompson-related Larned information in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's online catalog.

The society is home to a Larned collection of seven volumes of day-to-day military administration during the Revolutionary War, and farm life in Thompson covering the period 1777-1822. The first six volumes are written by Mr. Simon Larned, and the seventh contains Thaddeus Larned's diary with additional entries by his son Nodiah.

A description of the collection can be accessed at the link in the citation below. As you will read, references to Thompson are continuous throughout the **Abstract**, the **Background Notes**, and the **Scope & Content**.

While we are pleased to have access to the account of these papers through a sister historical society, it is sadly noted that we do wish that this precious and irreplaceable historical record of Thompson had been donated to our museum.

"Larned Papers, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania." Collection 1695. <http://www.hsp.org/files/findingaid1695larned.pdf> (accessed 9/2/10).

Members can find their paid status on the address sticker of this newsletter.

Members are encouraged to bring their dues up-to-date, if necessary, as the income generated by membership contributes greatly to the continued operation of the Society.

Contact information regarding dues/membership:

**Thompson Historical Society**  
**Attn: Membership**  
**P.O. Box 47**  
**Thompson, CT 06277**

**Contributing Membership: \$25.00**

**Individual Membership: \$10.00**

**Family Membership: \$15.00**

**Student/Gift Membership: \$5.00**

Members are invited to purchase first-year memberships for new members for a low introductory price of \$5.00.

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**Miscellany:** During the Great Depression, a New Deal Agency formed the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to employ out-of-work specialists. One project was the Federal Art Program. Between 1935 and 1942, artists around America were given related work to help them avoid financial ruin. Connecticut is fortunate that the WPA Arts program was documented and today resides at the Connecticut State Library. If you are interested in the WPA Arts program here in Connecticut, please visit <http://wpa.cslib.org>. A quick search for an artist with a connection to Thompson found Spencer Baird Nichols (1875-1950) who was the Director of Art at Marot Junior College, Thompson, CT (closed early 1940s).

*The Storm of 1938 - Courtesy of Mr. Frank Fitzgibbons*

*With September and the season of tropical storms upon us, our eyes are on the skies. I enclose a shot of the bad storm of 1938. The tree was the biggest I ever saw and there is nothing to compare to it in town.*

*Location was the Earl Mead Farm just off Rte 197, or officially named Old Turnpike. It was a healthy Elm as yet untouched by the Dutch Elm blight. It lay across the end of Walker Rd. and onto my grandmother's land.*

*We used to dream what it would be like to climb into the upper branches. Now the chance was available, but not as satisfactory. Somehow it got cut down to size. I know a lot was by hand tools. I still marvel that the big trunk was cut. There must have been some power tools in the area. The young lad pictured was probably Earl Mead Jr. He was ever the worker. For years, the tree and adjoining hedge made prime hiding places for kids. The original photo better shows the shingle damage. How lucky it caused no greater damage. Note the unpaved road.*

*Referring to Mr. Beck's request for information of a bomber crash in town (Q&A June 2010), I have memories of a bomber crash further north in Worcester County, likely to the east. I believe the Worcester Telegram published a picture of a twin engine bomber. The pilot was killed. It must have been out of Westover AFB. I am unsure if we were at war then or in the Preparedness days preceding it. Their files might shed light on it. Keep up the grand work.*

**August 2010**



**Earl Mead Farm, off Route 197, Quinebaug. 1938 Hurricane.  
Possibly Earl Meade Jr., in photograph.**

*The Last Green Valley Honors Dave and Peg Babbitt*

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In a letter to the Thompson Historical Society, in care of Joseph Iamartino, dated May 14, 2010, Charlene Perkins Cutler, Executive Director and CEO of the Last Green Valley wrote:

Our organization has the tradition of making award presentations each year at the annual meeting. While we have made great effort to acquire attractive and environmentally-friendly tributes for those honored we decided to change our strategy this year. During these challenging economic times, we felt that combining our efforts to be green with a gift to one of our partner organization seemed a truly useful way to honor an award recipient.

We presented David and Peggy Babbitt with the Boland-Hoskin Volunteer Award, recognizing their outstanding service to our organization. They received an attractive certificate indicating that in their honor we are making a gift to the Thompson Historical Society. I am pleased to enclose that contribution.

Thank you for all you do to keep the focus on our wonderful heritage.



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*Students Work for the Thompson Historical Society*

Sponsored by Eastconn, and paid by a grant, a team of local teenagers worked for the Society every Wednesday for the entire summer. The team put down plastic sheets in the basement of our museum and then shoveled tons of pea stone all

in the hopes of keeping the moisture levels down in the building. The pea stone was donated by Rawson Materials and delivered at no charge by Doug Demarais. Other work the Eastconn teens performed: cutting down overgrown bushes, hauling away tractor loads of tree limbs, photographing newspaper clippings dating back to the late 1800s, polishing floors, cataloging books and artifacts, preparing displays for the upcoming Civil War exhibit and many other tasks. More than 200 person-hours of help was received and greatly appreciated by the Society. The students, some from Thompson, and others from surrounding towns,



received a brief education in museum science, the daily operations of a non-profit group, and a greater appreciation for local history. We've asked the group to return next year and hope that Eastconn can find a way to make this happen. Additional thanks to TEEG for sponsoring our student workers and to the Marianapolis students who also participated in this summer's spruce-up.

In a letter to Mr. Jeffrey Rawson, Joseph Iamartino thanked him for his company's donation stating (in part): On behalf of the Thompson Historical Society, I would like to thank you and your company for the generous donation of 1/4 inch pea stone to be used in the restoration of the Ellen Larned Building, the town's former library, and now the home of the Thompson Museum.

**TRIED TO KIDNAP WARD'S SON**

Two Men Who Took the ex-Financier's Little Boy Caught at Webster, Mass.

*THOMPSON, Conn., Sept. 13—An unsuccessful attempt to kidnap Clarence Ward, the ten-year-old son of Ferdinand Ward, the ex-Napoleon of Finance of New-York City, was made here yesterday morning. Since the death of his mother, while Ward was serving his term at Sing Sing Prison for his dishonest acts in connection with the (former President Ulysses S. Grant) Grant & Ward failure, the child has been living here with his uncle, S.D. Green. (Editor's note: S.D. Green lived on Thompson Hill, on Quaddick Road, not far from the Congregational Church.)*

*While the boy was playing on the lawn in front of his uncle's house at about 8 o'clock yesterday morning a closed carriage containing two men appeared near the house. One of the men alighted, seized the boy, and dragged him screaming to the carriage. The men then drove off rapidly with the boy, and were outside the limits of the town before an alarm could be given.*

*Mr. Green immediately telegraphed and telephoned to all the neighboring towns and cities, requesting the police to be on the look-out for the kidnapers.*

*In two hours the closed carriage was caught at Webster, Mass., and the two men were arrested. Little Clarence was with them, unhurt, though badly frightened. He was taken back to his uncle's home. The men were held in Webster, to await the action of the courts.*

*The boy will inherit about \$80,000 from his mother's estate when he becomes of age.*

*There are two theories in regard to the attempted kidnapping. One is that the attempt was instigated by Ward, to get the boy into his custody. The other is that the attempt was made by those whose only motive was the hope of extorting a ransom.*

*Ward visited Mr. Green's house two years ago, and attempted to get possession of the child. Ward was married in Utica about two months ago.*

**Source: The New York Times, September 14, 1894**

A Google® search for Ferdinand Ward brought up General Grant's homepage. Please visit: <http://www.granthomepage.com/intward.htm>. Ward, Ferdinand. General Grant as I Knew Him. New York Herald (magazine section) December 19, 1909, pp. 1-2.  
In reminiscing about their relationship, Mr. Ward had many interesting statements not the least of which was:  
"At the time of my trial and conviction I was perhaps the best hated man in the United States."

*Help Wanted! More Q&A*

**Mystery Photo→**

This photograph is labeled only as September 12, 1909, West Thompson.

Can anyone help identify the ladies to the right?



Shhh...Spoiler Alert for *The Man in the Net* (pg 1): <http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title.jsp?stid=19288>.



☞ John Yannacci wrote: From about 1951 to 1955 I lived at Bonnette Acres in Thompson. At that time, there were about 12 houses there, 6 on the Connecticut side and 6 on the Massachusetts side. I went to the second and third grade at a three room school house near the Congregational Church in Thompson. I believe that it is now a Grange Hall. I have been able to bring my sons there to see my old school. The fourth grade was a one room school. I remember that the school bus took us near where Tourtellotte High School is and then crossed the railroad tracks. I have driven around that area but can't seem to locate the school. When I tell my boys (and other people for that matter) that I went to a one room school, the look at me with a touch of skepticism. Would you know where that school is located. A little over halfway through the fourth grade, my family moved to Massachusetts. I now reside in Waterford, CT and would like to show my boys the old one room school house.

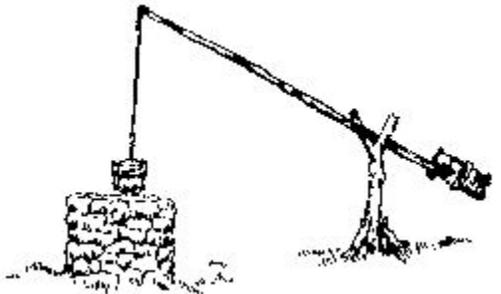
☞ The 2nd/3rd grade school John is referring to is the former Thompson Hill Elementary School, now the Grange Hall (Masonic Home). Unfortunately, the schoolhouse he is looking for no longer exists.

### *Loose Women and Nervous Horses in Old Thompson - Volume XIV #20, Webster Times, July 12, 1873*

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On Sunday night, July 6th, constables Elmer Bates and Comings made a raid on Beebee's den of harlots, and J. S. Perry went with them. They arrested Mr. Beebee and wife, and three frail fair ones, and two men; one of them took a leg bail for security, leaving a good team belonging in Webster, and his friend who gave his name as William Cunningham.

Just after the arrests were made, a little accident took place. Perry had hitched his horse to Beebee's well crotch, supposing it safe, but as Mr. Beebee went to draw a pitcher of water for the girls, the well sweep frightened Mr. Perry's horse and it pulled over the rotten old well crotch, the sweep striking the horse across the neck and pulling off the bridle. The horse then left in double quick time, clearing itself from the wagon. That was the last that Perry saw of his horse until Monday night, when Mr. Horatio Rhodes took it home. The harness was nearly all left in the woods, where it is not likely Perry will ever see it again. It was about the time of this accident that the prisoner above referred to, left. No one is to blame either for the horse running, or the escape of the fast young man.



The prisoners, six in number, were tried on Tuesday the 8th, before Justice Tourtellotte, and all found guilty of the charges alleged against them. Mr. Beebee was put under two hundred dollar bonds to appear at Brooklyn, at the August trial court. Mrs. Beebee and each of the three girls and Cunningham were put under thirty dollar bonds, each to appear at the same court. And not being satisfied with this, Perry had Beebee put under a two hundred dollar bond to keep the peace and for good behavior. Each of the others were put under a forty dollar bond for the same purpose, making in all eight hundred dollars.

Counsel for the State, G. S. F. Stoddard; counsel for Beebee, Martin Leach, a rising lawyer of Putnam, who said he had been under bonds a hundred times. This counsel was called after the refusal of Charlie Searles to have anything to do with the case. All honor to Charlie.

The backer for Beebee in Money, was Rosco Stear of Putnam, a wealthy rum merchant who carries his sign in his face. He is ready to back Beebee to the tune of fifty thousand if he wants it. We shall soon find out whether Perry is frightened of the price or not. It may be that Perry will call on Rosco to borrow enough to buy a new harness. The wonder is, would he get it?

Courtesy of Mike & Linda Braniff, 25 June 2010

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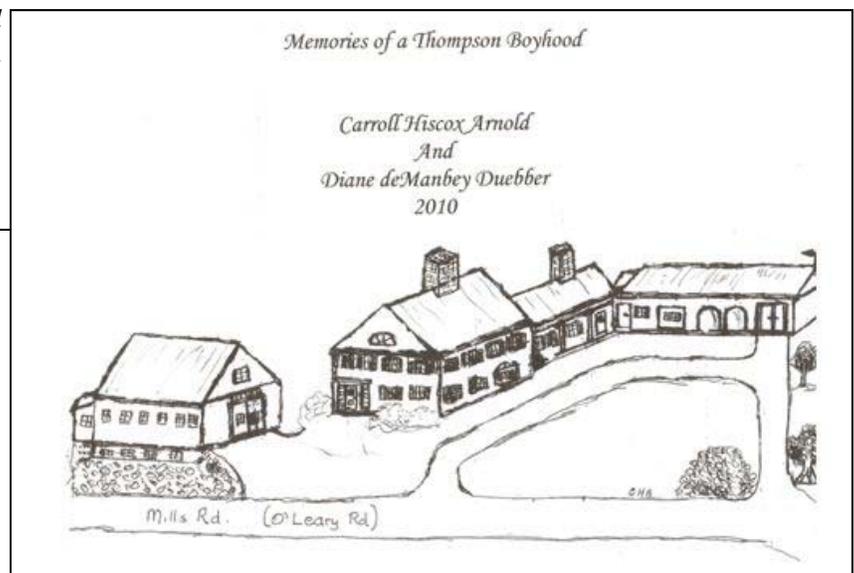
### *Memories of a Thompson Boyhood*

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As promised, Diane Duebber has provided the Thompson Historical Society with a copy of the above-named project. You can reference her introduction of the project by reviewing the June 2010 newsletter.

You can access a copy of this paper on the THS website:  
[www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)

Thank you Diane and Carroll!





The Thompson Historical Society  
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Q  
&  
A

Q: Susan Jankot wrote the Society with a geography question: In the Sunday Times Book Review, I read about the Boston Post Road. When I was a child, Mom would point out a track on upper Church St., that she said was a remnant of it. Do you think there are any markers around for it?

A: Ellen Larned refers to this road as the "Road of 1763" and mentions that for a distance it does parallel the Boston to Hartford turnpike (which implies that the road was free of toll). The road was probably discontinued about the time that the tolls were abolished on the turnpike road just a few hundred yards north of it, but this is just a guess. The cost of maintaining two bridges so close together, considering how many freshets happened every decade, probably decided the road's ultimate fate.



On Church St., as you head toward Putnam from W. Thompson, across the street from that big beautiful farm, there is the remnant of an old turnpike hidden in the woods. In this image, starting from Azud Road, you can see the road cutting across the river, through the field and passing just to the right of the farm house, then cutting across Church St. as it heads toward Woodstock. Ellen Larned discusses this road on page 72 in her 1760-1880 book as released in the Swordsmith edition. Best guess is that this is the south part mentioned as abandoned in her text.  
(Google® Map Image; accessed 9/10/10)