



# The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

www.thompsonhistorical.org

Winter 2003

## Calendar of Events

Membership meetings or events for the Society.

### Thompson Historical Society Gift Shop

#### Holiday Hours

- Sat. / Sun. November 29/30, 10 AM—4 PM
- Sat. / Sun. December 6/7, 10 AM—4 PM
- Sat. / Sun. December 13/14, 10 AM—4 PM
- Sat. / Sun. December 20/21, 10 AM—4 PM

#### Saturday, December 6, 2003 10 AM—2 PM

- Photos with Santa in a real sleigh at the Museum! Bring your children and grandchildren for their holiday photos. See page 3 for details.

#### Saturday, December 6, 2003 at 7:00 PM

- Christmas Concert—Host: Jane Vercelli  
The 15th Annual THS Christmas Concert Old Town Hall, Thompson Hill  
Rehearsal will be the same day, at the Old Town Hall. See details on pg. 3  
Rehearsal 5:30 p.m. Show starts at 7 PM

**Please note that the rehearsal hours have changed from the previous newsletter.**

#### Thursday, April 1, 2004 at 7:00 PM

- Presentation on *Organized Sports in Thompson's Villages*. See photos of old sporting events and teams; listen to stories about that big game way back when! How did Little League start in Thompson? Who was Coach Canty? Joe Lindley and our sports panel will help us relive those glory days.

**Thursday, April 29, 2004 at 7 PM**  
Topic to be announced.

The following dates are for Board of Directors meetings, to be held at the Larned Building at 7 PM:

**Thursday, January 15, 2004**  
**Thursday, March 4, 2004**  
**Monday, June 7, 2004— Picnic/ Annual Meeting for Directors/ Members (location—TBD)**

#### Museum Hours:

The Thompson Historical Society Museum at the Ellen Larned Memorial Building (Rt. 193—Thompson Common) is open the first Saturday of every month from 10 AM to 2 PM.

Visit our exhibit on the last Thompson country doctor, Dr. Robert Paine. See and hear about Dr. Paine and his family. Displayed items include Civil War equipment, children's games, fancy dresses and hats, fine dishware, Victorian furniture, medical apparatus used by the good doctor and much more in the colorful Larned building.

To contact the newsletter editor, send an email to [jjamartino@charter.net](mailto:jjamartino@charter.net)

### Membership Information

#### Membership dues are:

- \$10.00 Individual Membership
- \$15.00 Family Membership
- \$25.00 Contributing Membership
- \$5.00 Student Membership

#### Dues to be paid by July 1, 2003 for July 1, 2003—June 30, 2004 year

- 1st reminder: Summer newsletter
- 2nd reminder: Fall newsletter

THS—PO Box 47, Thompson CT 06277

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### Officers / Contact Info:

President: Joe Iamartino  
 Vice President: Sue Vincent  
 Treasurer: Barbara Weaver  
 Secretary: John Lengel  
 Curator: Mark Savolis  
 Collections: Hattie Greene  
 Photos: Alice Biesiadecki  
 Museum Shop: Lucille Barrette, Helen Flood, Beth Greene, Val Iamartino, Henrietta Panu, June Schoppe, Sue Vincent, Sandra Warner  
 Website: Barbara Loy  
 Museum: Barbara Weaver; Beth Greene  
 Concert Chair: Jane Vercelli  
**Call us 860 923 3200 or see [www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)**

**The President's Quill** by Joe Iamartino

In last month's column, I made the plea for volunteer help. A number of people came to me and said that they would love to help but what could they do?

I am devoting this column to explaining the different committees inside the Society. I am also listing the phone numbers of the committee leader for those interested in participating.

- 1) **Gift shop committee** - This group operates the gift shop in the Old Town Hall.

To get involved in display, setup and material selection, contact Sue Vincent (860 923 5728) or Val Iamartino (860 923 3776). To work as a volunteer salesperson for 4 hours on a Saturday one or two times per year, contact Helen Flood (860 923 9946)

- 2) **Museum, Collections & Exhibits**

This committee is responsible for the new Museum at the Ellen Larned Memorial Building as well as the Society's collection of artifacts, photos, and memorabilia.

Contact Barbara Weaver (860 923 9733) to get involved with exhibition work, organizing the collections, cataloguing, data entry, or working as museum guides.

- 3) **Membership & Newsletters** - This group keeps track of our members and communicates Society news and items of

interest to members.

Contact Joe Iamartino (860 923 3776). C'mon folks, send in those stories!!

- 4) **Electronic media committee** - This group manages our digital archives, and creates audio and video histories, material for the website. Talk to Blair Cole (860 923 2998)

- 5) **Membership Programs and Events Committee** - This team organizes our membership programs & special events offered throughout our season. Contact Sue Vincent at 860 923 5728. For the Christmas Concert, call Jane Vercelli at 923-9661.

- 6) **Specialized groups**

\*\* *Grant-writing &*

*Community Outreach*

\*\* *Major Fundraising Plans,* (includes book publishing and an auction

Contact: Joe Iamartino (860 923 3776)

\*\* *Building Committee*

\*\* *Bylaws and Nominations*

For these groups, contact John Lengel (860 928 1166).

There.....now you know who to call and the different ways to get involved. This is a great way to get to know your neighbors AND give back to the community. Even a couple of hours a year can help us.....

Happy Holidays!

**Position Available!**

The Society is looking to fill the newly created and paid position of **Administrative Assistant**. This person will report to the President of the Society. He/she will:

- Maintain the membership list of the Society; send member cards
- Manage the Society's office activities such as picking up and forwarding mail; answering phone calls; scheduling coverage of museum staff; building opening/closing times/ personnel; mail documents etc.
- Participate in and help coordinate Society activities / events; assist with fundraising tasks
- Give museum tours to school children and other groups
- Catalog and process collections under the direction of the Museum Committee
- Perform simple maintenance tasks; obtain repair quotes
- Monitor workmen at the Society's properties; schedule repairs and cleaning as approved by the THS Board
- Assist with exhibit planning and preparation
- Other duties as assigned

Qualifications: Demonstrated ability to work effectively with people. Excellent communication skills. Proven administrative ability. Familiarity with Microsoft Office computer applications (will train the right person). Previous work in a museum or library environment helpful. Stipend: \$4000—1 yr. ; Very flexible hours—37 hours / mo. with 10 hours / wk maximum. No benefits. 1 month completely off. Nice role for the right person; Interested? Call Sue 860 923 5728



### News:

On October 4th, The Thompson Lions Club celebrated their 50th Anniversary. Dave Babbitt presented the Lions story at the Oct. 9th Society meeting. Our thanks to the Lions and to Dave for years of service.

Robert & Marilyn Dustin shared their lifetime of birding experience with us recently. Thanks to both for an enjoyable evening. A list of the birds they have seen in Thompson and the best local sites for bird-watching will be posted on the Nature section of the Thompson website, [www.thompsonct.org](http://www.thompsonct.org).

After the museum opening, a nice gold brooch was found on the Common. If you can identify it, it is yours. Call 860 923 3776.

*Where is the Pictorial History Book?*  
Two dozen writers and reviewers have been working to get the book ready. We have seen our 3rd draft now from Donning and delivery should be early in the new year. If you haven't reserved your copy, call Val -Tel. 860 923 3776 or fax 860 923 0161. This book will have a limited first run of 750 copies, available on first come, first served basis. No money needed now to reserve your copy. Available in soft (~\$40) or leather cover versions (~\$60). Pricing will vary slightly based on mix of leather versus soft cover orders.

The Orange Historical Society is looking for 12 ft clapboards. Contact Ginny Reinhard (203) 795-3106

The 15th Annual Christmas Concert at the Old Town Hall will be held Sat., Dec. 6th at 7 p.m. with Ted Bradley leading the singing as Music Director and Jane Vercelli emceeing the evening as Concert Chair. Everyone (children, men and women) who would like to sing in the chorus is invited to come early on Sat., Dec. 6th at 5:30 p.m. to rehearse prior to the 7 p.m. start of the show. This practice will take the place of the rehearsal usually held on Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend. The program for the chorus will be as follows: children -- "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus;" men -- "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree;" women -- "Home for the Holidays;" men and women: "Let It Snow" and "Deck the Halls." Ted Bradley will also lead everyone, including the audience, in the singing of carols.

The special acts this year will feature some folks who are new to the Christmas Concert stage as well as regular performers, including Peter Lange on guitar, Ned Lange on violin, Lars Vercelli singing, Jim Gaskell on trumpet, a group of recorders, a string quartet, and several family groups singing and playing guitars. In a time when Christmas seems to be more commercialized every year, this concert celebrating the season with both sacred and secular music spanning the centuries is as homespun and old-fashioned as it gets. Join us for a delightful evening!

Would you like to sing or do a reading that is special to you or play an instrument as a "special act?" Auditions are NOT required, and everyone is welcome to be in the show. Just call Jane Vercelli at 923-9661. See you on Dec. 6th!

**SPELLING & Misc.:** We have had a number of discussions recently concerning the spelling of several regions in town, notably Quinebaug and Quadic. The Quinabaug (spelled with an 'a' instead of an 'e') Historical Society leaflets clearly show the name and crest with the 'a' spelling. That Society, established in 1899, produced historical leaflets of great interest, of which we have just a few. If any reader knows where these leaflets may be had, please contact us.

Quadic has been spelled different ways since its earliest days. Ellen Larned talked of the Quaddic Factory of 1813. The 1869 map of the area clearly spells it as Quaddick. Quinnatisset is spelled multiple ways in the books. All I can say is that the letter Q is trouble for spellers in Thompson.

**VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS PHOTOGRAPHS  
AT THE ELLEN LARNED MEMORIAL MUSEUM**

**SAINT NICHOLAS WILL APPEAR ON DECEMBER 6,  
DURING THE MUSEUM'S REGULAR HOURS  
(10 AM TO 2 PM).**

**SAINT NICHOLAS WILL WEAR HIS VICTORIAN BEST  
AND SIT ON THE BENNETT FAMILY SLEIGH FOR PHOTO-  
GRAPHS.**

**BRING THE CHILDREN; BRING THE GRANDCHILDREN  
FOR THIS VERY SPECIAL PHOTO SESSION**

First page of photos \$6.95, further pages \$4 ea.  
Your choice of sizes (8x10, two 5x7's, wallet sizes, etc.) Printed  
on site.

**THE MUSEUM LIVING ROOM, ARRANGED WITH THE.  
PAINES' BELONGINGS, WILL BE DECORATED WITH A  
VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS TREE DESIGNED BY BETH  
GREENE.**

**THIS TREE WILL BE RAFFLED OFF;  
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT TOWN HALL SHOP (3/\$1.00; 10/  
\$3.00); TREE GIVEN TO WINNER DECEMBER 7.**

**Questions? Call Beth (923-3344) or Marlys (923-3168)**



**Disappearing Paintings Mysteries:** No one could identify the mystery photos from the last newsletter. Try these mysteries...

Many years ago, there was a famous man named "Squire" Aaron White who lived in Quinebaug. He was the secretary to R.I.'s Gov. Dorr during Dorr's Rebellion. After the rebellion ended in disaster, White fled to the Quinebaug area and hid in the woods. A girl brought him food while he was in hiding. When all was safe, the two married. She died not long after from complications resulting from the birth of a son. The Squire had a full size painting made of her (after her death) and he kept the painting in a room with all of her wardrobe untouched until his death years later. After he was buried, the painting disappeared.

The Thompson Library once had a wonderful painting of Ellen Larned, the library's founder. The painting, said to be an incredible likeness of Ms. Larned, Windham County's greatest historian and a lifelong Thompson resident, was stolen one day. Perhaps you can help us with these UNSOLVED MYSTERIES....

**Ladies received free flowers and men free cigarettes at the opening of the Quinebaug Drive-In on Rte. 131, near the 4 Corners. Alan Ladd, who later starred in a 1959 movie filmed in Thompson, "The Man in the Net", starred in "Branded". Society Treasurer John Lengel recently bought, on eBay, an excellent copy of the rare, full length movie theatre version of "The Man in the Net". We hope to see this version soon in one of the Society membership meetings. John monitors eBay for us and mines those rare Thompson gems. Good work!**

**Frank M. Messenger**  
**Grosvenordale Company Mill Agent**

We recently received several interesting letters from Don Berry and his sister Marilyn Couch about their grandfather, Frank Messenger. Mr. Messenger was the powerful mill agent of the Grosvenordale Company. A religious man and a member of the Holy Jumpers sect, Frank decided to leave North Grosvenordale in the early 1900s to join a church commune out west. This was all we knew until we received this note from Don Berry (Oct. 8, 2003):

*I was forwarded your e-mail by my sister, Marilyn Couch and noted your search for information on our grandfather, F. M. Messenger and his decision to leave North Grosvenordale for Waukesha, Wis. The "Holy Jumpers" were part of the Metropolitan Church Association or Burning Bush which was an offshoot of the Methodist church and the genesis of other groups such as the Nazarene church and the Church of God (all of which are still active, some thriving). Grandfather wrote of his experience and was published by the Metropolitan Church Association in 1910. I have a copy of the book "Catacombs of Worldly Success or History of Coarsellor Dell". Coarsellor Dell is North Grosvenordale and the mill business and many individuals are lightly (sometimes humorously) caricatured "to avoid doing personal injury". Having talked at length with Bob Miller and Dave Babbitt, I am sure they will recognize the mill owners, the many ministers, and others who are skewered by grandfather for their many sins as he saw it. I wish you could read it but so far I have not been able to find another copy.*

*For information on the Burning Bush, go to Google and enter "Metropolitan Church Association" with quote marks. There was an Asbury (KY) College thesis written and the writer contacted me for some information on F. M. Messenger. When F.M. Messenger left the Burning Bush in 1914, he helped found the Nazarene church in Chicago with my grandfather Berry. F.M. was penniless, having given all he owned to the Burning Bush commune but he borrowed \$3500 from his former associates in Connecticut and founded a successful funeral supplies business which printed the scripture text calendars that featured original religious art and a bible verse for each day. He certainly was a colorful character and in the forefront of the religious movements of his day. I hope these thoughts are useful to your group.*

*Don Berry (donvberry@aol.com)*

Marilyn Couch will be sending us photos of Mr. Messenger and his family, who once lived in grand style at the agent's home at the intersection of Rt. 12 and Buckley Hill. Our thanks to both Don and Marilyn for explaining the F.M. Messenger story.



Thornfield Hall has been seen in many Thompson Historical Society documents. You may recognize it from the TV show 'Dark Shadows'.



Notice the 3 unusual tunnel doors under the Chandler house, now owned by the Williams', on Rt. 193.

**Last Minute Addition to the  
 Frank. M. Messenger Story**

Don Berry wrote another note on Oct. 25: "...in the book "Catacombs of Worldly Success or History of Coarsellor Dell", Grosvenordale is "Coarsellor Dell", and F.M. Messenger is "Courier". I hope you and others can decipher "Knaveson", "Inchesot", "Hangem", "Judge Tortoisort" and other characters and events covered in the book.

*Of course, Grandfather was a man of strong and unyielding principle as he saw things so his opinion of many people was no more flattering than the opinion of him expressed in the Lutheran church history shared with us by Dave Babbitt....."*

### Ask The Society

Q. I have an old paper that talks about Mr. William Babbitt 'having a new wheel'. Explain this term please.

A. This is a good opportunity to kill two birds with one answer. Another reader asked about the Monthly Record, a paper put out by the Thompson Congregational Church in the 1890s. In the Volume I, Number 6 edition, under Personals, the following were listed:

- Miss Julia Bates is still quite ill
- Dexter Elliott has arrived for the summer
- Miss Shaw's popularity is being demonstrated by the number of May baskets she is receiving
- Miss Sarah A. Munyan has been badly poisoned by dogwood but is improving
- Arbor Day exercises at the public school, reflected much credit upon teachers and scholars
- Mrs. Searls is suffering from a severe cold
- Mrs. Washburn is a guest at the Chapin House until her home on West Street, which is undergoing extensive repairs, ready for occupancy
- Mrs. & Miss Lewis spent several days in Boston

Apparently no one came or left town without the editors being aware of it. It was a VERY small village. In the paper, they also listed the following:

- Miss Florence Green is the happy possessor of a wheel
- Mr. William Babbitt is riding a new wheel

In the middle of the 1890s, 'safety' bicycles came on the market, allowing women to ride for the first time. Susan B. Anthony said in 1896 that the bicycle had done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. People could now visit friends farther from home or live farther from work. Obviously bicycling was important. The Monthly Record mentioned trips, illnesses, home repairs, village gossip and every 'new wheel'. See the August 2003 Victorian Homes magazine for a recent article on the wheeling craze of 1895.

Q. Why does the old Vernon Stiles Inn sign show a man in a carriage drawn by white horses? This is an unusual sign painting.

A. It is fairly well known that the man depicted in the horse drawn carriage is the Marquis de Lafayette while on his 1824 grand tour of America. According to a Hartford Courant interview with former inn-owner Paul Morgan (1981), Lafayette stayed for 3 days at the Vernon Stiles Inn and visited a few local people.

Morgan said, "my great-grandmother saw him and was desperately disappointed. She told my grandmother, 'he was such a dried up little old monkey of a man' ". Morgan then pointed out that 50 years had passed between the time Lafayette was a dashing young soldier fighting side by side with George Washington during the American Revolution and his 1824 visit to Thompson.

Few realize that Lafayette was only 19 when he came to America in 1777, and he came on his own volition, having left France without governmental approval. He was of noble blood and a French officer before he left France. He served Washington loyally throughout the war. He was a valuable friend in the years to follow. A September 2003 article in American Heritage magazine mentions that upon his death in 1834, Lafayette was buried in France but in soil sent from America and his grave is in a cemetery of Americans.

Q. Who is Elliott P. Joslin?

A. Dr. Elliott Proctor Joslin (b. 1869) was a leading researcher of diabetes and the founder of the Joslin Diabetes Center in 1898 in Boston, today the world leader in diabetes research, treatment, and education. The center is closely allied with Harvard. Joslin also served as President of Emerson College in Boston. He cofounded the Barton Center for children with diabetes in Oxford, MA.

In a number of documents, Dr. Joslin is said to be from Thompson, but information is sketchy. If our readers have more information on this topic, please send it in.