



The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

www.thompsonhistorical.org

March 2009

Calendar of Events

Board of Director Meeting Dates – 2009

Working meetings will take place alternate Fridays 7-9 pm at the ELM. Call for dates. 923-3776. Full Board Meeting:

5/28, 7 PM ELM Bldg.

Membership Events & Presentations:

May 4, 2009 – Old Town Hall, Thompson Hill

A presentation by Cynthia Dias-Reid: *'John Trumbull, Painter and Patriot of the American Revolution'*, jointly sponsored by THS and the Thompson Recreation Department.

Born in Lebanon, Connecticut, John Trumbull was one of the country's most famous painters. Everyone is familiar with his work such as the 'Declaration of Independence', yet few know of his extraordinary life. Learn of his role in the American Revolution and his later travels and remarkable work into the 19th century.

Cynthia Dias-Reid is the director of the Jonathan Trumbull Junior House Museum located in Lebanon, CT. She was formerly employed as curator of the Clara Barton Birthplace Museum and assistant curator of the Willard House and

Clock Museum. She has also worked in the education departments of Higgins Armory Museum, Old Sturbridge Village and Slater Mill Historic Site.

In addition to working in the museum field, Ms. Dias-Reid lectures on "Women's History Through 19th Century Fashion", "Early New England Gardens" and "Clockmakers of Early New England".

Ms. Dias-Reid has illustrated the Old Sturbridge Village Cookbook and Herbal and has taught art and historically based workshops at a number of associations including senior centers and libraries. She is also a hand weaver and artist who owns and operates her home business, Dovecote Studio, in Woodstock, Connecticut.

June 20, 2009 - TMHS Alumni Association Banquet

This year marks 100 years of successful secondary learning at Tourtellotte Memorial High School. An Alumni Banquet will be held at the Thompson Speedway on June 20, 2009, at 6:30 PM. For details, call 860-923-2350 or visit the TMHS Alumni Association on the web at:

www.thompson.ctschool.net/TMHSAA/index.html

The 2009 THS calendars have incorrect dates for the month of August. To download a corrected calendar page for August 2009, go to www.thompsonhistorical.org

May 2, 2009: Source to the Sea Event (by the Last Green Valley)

At the West Thompson Dam; Joe Iamartino (Thompson Historical Society) & Michelle Dwyer (U.S. Army Corp of Engineers) will discuss the old village of West Thompson & the creation of the West Thompson Dam / Lake in the 1960s. 860-923-3776 after April 20th for details.

Thompson Historical Society Annual Meeting & Picnic – June 8 (at Greystone Farm, Rt 21) ; 6 pm dinner; 7 pm annual meeting. Call Sue 860 923 5728 /Joe 860 923 3776 for details.

Membership dues are:

Individual Membership – \$10;

Family Membership – \$15;

Contributing Membership – \$25;

Student/Gift Membership – \$5

Dues to be paid by July 1, 2008 for the 2008-2009 year.

Mail to:

Membership, PO Box 47, Thompson, CT 06277

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 Vice President: Burton Rhodes
 Treasurer: Susan Vincent
 Secretary: Mark Snay (p-t)
 Curator: Joe Iamartino
 Photos: Alice Biesiadecki
 Museum Shop: Lucille Barrette, Helen Flood, Carol Holewa, Val Iamartino, Henrietta Panu, Jane Provost, June Schoppe, Sue Vincent
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President's Quill: As I write this, it is 13 deg F outside, an unusually cold day for this time of year. There is half a foot of new snow on the ground and more on the way. In my kitchen, there is a 'fire' in the fireplace, candles are lit on the kitchen table, and, in about 5 minutes, my family will be eating dinner. The wind howls, the snow swirls and the shutters chatter away. It is dark and cold outside but, in my kitchen, there is the flicking flames in the fireplace and the room is warm.

What is it about a fire in the fireplace and candles that draw us together? Two hundred years ago, we lit the candles every night just for the light. Now, we light the candles and somehow the night becomes more magical, special. Why?

In the days gone by, we lit the fireplace to heat our homes everyday. Now, we light these fireplaces for special occasions – Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, birthday parties. Why? What is it about a fire in the fireplace that so resonates with us?

Deep in our souls, something is touched by the mysterious wavering flames, the hissing of the logs, the blue, red, orange and yellow flames. We are together when we are in front of the fire, but somehow more together. We may be romantic without the candles, but when they are lit, things are more intimate. The fire naturally draws us closer, not just for light and warmth, but, for the most human reasons, the need to be safe, secure warm and together.

That fire, in another time, kept animal predators away. The heat warmed tired feet, aching arms, sick children, and, perhaps after a long night of riding a horse in the rain, stopped the shivering of a lonesome rider at some out of the way tavern. Without the fire, all would be lost. Survival was all but impossible without fire back then.

Today, it seems as if we don't need to see the fire anymore. The furnace is hidden in the basement. No one sees the flame except the oil man during his service calls. A few of us still use a stove with a gas flame, but many have gone over to the electric stovetop. A few use woodstoves, and tell us how pleasant it is but most don't bother anymore. Progress comes with its price.

The grill is around but that is has been turned into a utilitarian steel-encased outdoor cooking 'center' with about as much fire intimacy as a muffler. I can't get away from my grill fast enough! I am sure too that if I had to cut wood to keep the fireplaces going day and night, I probably wouldn't love an open fire as much as I do. We do have to give up something I suppose.

For me, nothing beats the candles lit at dinner. For the full effect, you have to turn off the electric lights. Then, when your eyes adjust, dinner will be just right. II

More Miscellaneous Topics

Jean Cole: The January 3, 2009 Norwich Bulletin selected Thompson resident, Jean Cole, as Newsmaker of the Day. Jean worked for infant specialist Dr. T. Berry Brazelton for 20 years at the Brazelton Institute at the Children's Hospital in Boston. Jean authored a chapter in the influential book "The Newborn as a Person: Enabling Healthy Infant Development Worldwide". Jean's chapter was *Preparing Professionals to Work with Newborns; The Brazelton Institute Experience: United States*. Thompson is honored to have Jean Cole!

Wilsonville Memories: Ted Raszka & his sister Kay (Raszka) Stone continue to seek out Wilsonville village memories & historical information. You can reach Ted by emailing to advance2@mindspring.com or calling 503-602-7429.

Jim Sali dropped by with an interesting tidbit from the Presidential Pages in the Hartford Courant of Dec. 28, 2008. The short piece describes the career of Senator Augustine Lonergan who was born in Mechanicsville, CT on May 20, 1874. His election to the U.S. Senate in 1932 ended the political career of U.S. Senator Hiram Bingham of New Haven. Bingham was the college professor / explorer who discovered the lost Incan city of Machu Picchu, and later became the Governor of Connecticut and U.S. Senator. Lonergan died October 18, 1947, ending his own distinguished career as a lawyer and statesman.

Clippings: Thanks to Marilyn Labbe & staff at the Killingly Historical Society for more clippings...

The Webster Weekly Times: A. Spalding, Publisher & Editor, Webster, Mass., Thursday morn. March 17, 1859 Vol. 1 No. 1 **Liquor Seizures.** The deputy sheriff of West Woodstock, assisted by officers of Windham County, Ct., made a descent upon the premises of Rufus Young and Geo. Luke, notorious liquor dealers of Thompson, and N. B. Royce, proprietor of the hotel in North Woodstock, a few days ago, on complaint of some of the prominent citizens of Thompson and East Woodstock. About five hundred gallons of liquor was found on the premises of Young and Luke, which is deposited with the town authorities at New Boston. Royce had trials on Tuesday and Wednesday, and was convicted;--Luke and Young have their trial next week. *Note: New Boston is present-day Fabyan*

FOR SALE - By the Subscriber. Eighteen Fine Shoats! East Thompson, March 16, 1859. George W. Tourtellott (*THS Editor's note: a shoat is a piglet*)

Windham County Transcript—Aug. 9, 1906: Mrs. Jacob F. Tourtellotte of Minneapolis, Minn., who is to build an academy for the town of Thompson at a cost of \$100,000 to \$150,000 & endow the institution with a fund of btw \$4,000,000 & 5,000,000, is expected to arrive here in the East about Aug 15 & make a final decision as to the location of the building.

Dr. McGregor: In the Civil War, Thompson's primary doctor, John McGregor, offered his services to the Union Troops. He was captured in the great battle at Bull Run. The local newspapers kept the villages of Thompson up to date on the fate of the good doctor....

Windham County Transcript - 1 Aug. 1861 - After the battle of Bull Run

As of our friend, **Dr. McGregor**, over whose fate some uncertainty hangs, we cannot think or write, save as of one who will in time be returned to us. If a prisoner, his professional position in the army would secure him merciful treatment from any enemy raised above the lowest dregs of barbarism—and would not, until compelled by the most conclusive evidence, class the Southern rebels below the Comanche Indians. We know that he came out unharmed from the shock of battle, and we cannot think that he has been murdered while engaged in the performance of his duties. When last seen he was busy ministering to the wants and alleviating the sufferings of the wounded, with that kindness, coolness and skill which has made him so popular among us. He was "staying with the boys" nobly and fearlessly performing his duty;.....

[Correspondence of the *Transcript*
D. C., July 26, 1861

WASHINGTON,

DEAR SIR: You are already informed of the great fight, victory, and ignominious retreat last Sunday.....The Connecticut Regiments behaved *well*, both in the fight and retreat, saving all their own baggage and equipment and that of *four* other regiments besides.--The loss of our three Regiments is thought to be less than 100 men in killed, wounded and missing, among whom we have to record **Dr. McGregor**, Surgeon of the Third Regiment, supposed to be a prisoner and **James F. Wilkinson**, about whom nothing has been heard from since the retreat.

The last known of **Dr. McGregor**, he was in the *hospital doing his duty*, and although *advised to run* it seems he preferred not to leave the poor wounded men, even to save himself. All honor to such heroism. to their interests the men all love him. Always esteemed, he is now loved a thousand fold more than before. ...The troops are pouring in here from the North, and we shall soon see 150,000 men here under **McClellan**, When I learn more definitely about **Dr. McGregor** and **Mr. Wilkinson** I will inform you.In great haste,
C. Blackmar.

15 Aug. 1861 - LETTER FROM DR. MCGREGOR: Oakland, near Bull's Run Ridge}2nd day after the battle.

My Dear Wife:--You doubtless feel uncertain as to my fate. It this is permitted to reach you, your fears will be dissipated, for I can assure you that I am safe, although a prisoner of war. I staid with those poor wounded

men, as a matter of duty, which I felt I owed to humanity. I have been most considerately treated by every officer of the Confederate army whom I have met. Our wounded are also treated with great kindness, and every want administered to, so far as the circumstances of the case will admit of. Many have been the kind sympathizing acts which I have witnessed by soldiers who came to see the wounded. I think they would not only share but give to their wounded enemies the very food or drink which they themselves greatly stand in need of. Those having friends wounded, may not fear but they will be kindly and tenderly treated. How soon I may be permitted to return to you I have no means of judging, doubtless as soon as policy will admit. Until I return, give yourself no uneasiness about me, for I have no fears of unkind treatment. My kind regards to all.
Yours affectionately,

John McGregor

7 Nov. 1861 - DR. MCGREGOR

We have received several inquiries in relation to the whereabouts of **Dr. McGregor**. We would state that his friends at Thompson have information that he was among the number that were sent to Castle Pinkney, in Charleston harbor.

9 Jan. 1862 - From the list of prisoners now in the Southern States, brought by Mr. Ely, the released Congressman, we learn that Mr. Wilkinson has been sent to Alabama. Dr. McGregor, of Thompson, was at Charleston. Since Mr. Ely's return, the Union prisoners have been removed from Charleston to Columbia, S. C., and it is probable the Doctor is among the number. It is probable the Federal government will send forward other prisoners to be exchanged for our soldiers in the hands of the rebels, taking advantage of the mode inaugurated by the recent transfer, & we hope to welcome our patriotic associate & heroic Doctor home again.

23 Jan. 1862 - COUNTY LOCALS - THOMPSON : We learn that the family of **Dr. McGregor** have received a communication from him since his removal to Columbus, S.C. He was in good health and spirits, and had better quarters than he had while in Charleston. Persistent efforts have been made to effect his release by an exchange.....

27 Feb. 1862- RETURNED PRISONERS

The Confederate authorities have decided to release all the Union prisoners, either by exchange or on parole, and we expect daily to greet our young friend **Wilkinson** and **Dr. McGregor**.

31 July 1862 - DR. MCGREGOR RELEASED

Our readers will be happy to learn that **Dr. McGregor** is at last released from the prisons of the South. He arrived at the headquarters of the Army of the Potomac on the 26th inst., in company with **Rev. H. Eddy**, chaplain of the 2nd Connecticut, **Drs. Stone** and **Grey**, U.S.A., and **Rev. G. W. Dodge** of the 11th N.Y. All these gentlemen were taken prisoners at Bull Run and are just released from the prisons at Salisbury, N.C. The Dr. may be expected to arrive home soon.

7 Aug. 1862 - ARRIVAL OF DR. MCGREGOR

Dr. McGregor arrived home at Thompson on Sunday morning last, and was received at the depot by a number of friends who had learned that he intended to arrive at that time. On his way to the house he was met by a party of ladies singing "Home Sweet Home," a song which can only be fully appreciated by those who have been long absent. On Monday evening a delegation of ladies and gentlemen from Putnam, attended by the Cornet Band, made the Doctor a visit, and the band played tunes which we hope will soon be made familiar to gentle ears in Dixie. He spoke to the people of Thompson last evening, and will speak to the citizens of Putnam and vicinity at Quinebaug Hall on Wednesday evening next. We hope the young men in particular will be in attendance, for the sight of, and words from, a patriot may inspire them with a determination to emulate his actions and sacrifices for the country. He addressed the citizens of Thompson yesterday afternoon on the subject of "His Experiences, Observations and Reflections, during the last fifteen months, in Secessia." We go to press too early to give any report of his address this week.

14 Aug. 1862 - THOMPSON

Dr. McGregor, whose return we noticed in the *Transcript* of last week, was on Wednesday the recipient of an ovation from his old friends and neighbors that no *human* heart could receive without emotions of gratitude—and the history of our friend the past year, forever stamps him the type of true humanity. The Doctor's part in the battle of Bull Run—his philanthropic action and self abnegation, have so often been recited in our columns, that it is unnecessary again to refer to them.

On Wednesday afternoon, the people of Thompson and the surrounding towns, assembled in the beautiful Park in that pleasant town, to hear a recital of his experiences, observations and reflections during his confinement at the South. Wm. H. Chandler, Esq., introduced the Doctor by a few well chosen, eloquent words, and proposed three cheers for their honored townsman, which were given with great heartiness. Before the commencement of the address, the "Star Spangled Banner" was sung by a corps of ladies and gentlemen, after which the Doctor came forward and offered a touching petition of thanksgiving to God for his preservation and Fatherly care in again permitting him to meet his friends and loved ones once more, and an earnest invocation for the protection and success of the brave men in the front ranks of our army, and for the restoration of peace once more under the sacred banner of our love. We are enabled to give only an extract of the remarks of the Doctor, which were listened to with great interest.

THE ADDRESS (by Dr. McGregor)

My dear friends: A long period has passed since I met these my old friends and neighbors; and O! what a period! Twelve months in a lonesome prison house of the rebels! I do not propose an attempt at oratory, but simply to relate some of the incidents of that dark period of our history.

Early on the morning of the 21st of July, our great and noble army marched to attack the enemy. At 8 o'clock the first gun was fired, and soon the action became general. I soon found a house which was provided as a hospital. At 9 the first patient came in, and from that hour onward through the day, wounded of every description came pouring into the hospital. At 2 o'clock the cheering report came that our troops were driving the enemy. Senator Foster and Representative Lovejoy were in the hospital, and were laboring to relieve the poor men who were wounded. I am unable to give a description of the scene which transpired beneath that roof. At 5 o'clock someone came and said our army was retreating. We then had 150 wounded men. I then used the surgeons right to take possession of every conveyance, and by the time the retreat had commenced, had passed back 100 of these wounded soldiers. At 5 ½ o'clock 1000 rebel cavalry charged upon the hospital. The first intimation of their approach was the sound of the balls striking the house. I rushed out of doors, and demanded of a rebel officer that he should protect the hospital. The balls were flying thick about me, but I was not conscious of any fear. At this time I saw a case of shocking barbarity on the part of a rebel soldier. Col. McCook was shot, and fell over a fence. One of the cavalry soldiers ordered him to stand up and hand him his canteen, which the miscreant took and then battered the head of the Colonel with it. The retreat of the cavalry was as rapid as their charge. A few shots from some pieces of Union artillery, soon put them to rout.

The Connecticut Brigade was the only brigade that left the field organized. I was called by several officers who wished me to escape, but I replied, here are fifty wounded soldiers whose wounds have not been attended to—some bleeding to death—I CANNOT LEAVE THEM. (cheers.) The poor fellows were exclaiming, "Don't leave us, Doctor, we shall die." I claim no praise for remaining with these men; I should have been other than human to have left them. Had I then known that staying with them would have resulted in a year's suffering and imprisonment, I could not have left. (Cheers) I feel proud of the consciousness of doing my duty...(address edited) *Editor's Note: Marilyn Labbe (Killingly Historical Soc.) intends to release more soon..*



William 'Willie' Bednarz was a lifelong North Grosvenordale resident. He was an outstanding baseball player for the local mill semi-pro teams, playing primarily as a catcher. During World War II, Bednarz played a lot of baseball while in the Army, including an exhibition game against the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium.

In picture 1, comedian Al Schacht is sprawled across home plate trying to steal Willie's signals to the pitcher. The laughing Yankee player at the plate is not known.

In the 2nd photo, Willie is in the dugout with the AAA (Anti-Aircraft Artillery) team. He is in the back row, 3rd from the right. In the front row, 3rd from the left with head on hand, the "Clown Prince of Baseball", Al Schacht, is casually glancing to his right.



About Al Schacht (Based on the Deadballera.com website): Al Schacht pitched in the major league for three years, (1919-1921 (all with the Washington Nats, where he accrued a 14-10 lifetime mark before a sore arm put him on the shelf for good. For the next fifteen years after his retirement, he turned to coaching. It was during these years that he developed a comedy routine that he would perform for fans at the ball park. In the beginning, he teamed with Nats coach, former major league star Nicky Altrock. Al was always a pleasant and witty man, who could in the words of one of his teammates, "make a corpse laugh." Schacht made up a costume of a battered top hat, tattered coat, and took his act to the road. It was part pantomime and part anecdotes! The act was an immediate hit, and he toured the ballparks around the country. His season finale was always the World Series. He toured with the USO, traveling with Babe Ruth and others to Europe, Africa, and the Pacific. Al Schacht died on July 14th, 1984 at the age of 91, leaving behind a legacy of laughter and fun. Thanks Jim Sali for the story....

From the May / June 1963 TMHS Hilltopper:

Excerpts from "A Look Back—Twenty Five Years Ago at Tourtellote High" by Joyce Jewell.

Let us turn our thoughts back twenty-five years and take a look at our school as it was in the year 1938.

Mr. Melvin E. Smith was then the superintendent of schools in Thompson. Miss Mowry, Miss Gahagan, and Mr. Jerome Ryscavage were familiar teachers at Tourtellotte. Agriculture was taught by Mr. Henry Dunleavy.

1938 was the first year that TMHS decided to name its school newspaper the "Hilltopper". It was also the year that Tourtellotte became known as the 'Tigers'. Most of the students at the high school were seen for the first time displaying tigers on their jackets and sweaters.

The graduating class that consisted of 38 students. All but two of the class went on the annual Washington trip which amounted to \$48. (What a difference compared to \$151

today!) (editor's note....remember that the \$151 is referring to 1963 dollars). The chaperones for the trip were Mr. & Mrs. Frank. The seniors went by school bus to Providence and by boat at night from Providence to New York. The remainder of the trip was by bus. Stops were made in Philadelphia to see places of interest, including the Liberty Bell. Visits were made to the Shenandoah Caverns and all places of importance in Washington. Students arrived home after traveling through Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York.

The depression had not long been over in 1938, so the majority of the people were much poorer than they are now. Not very many children had spending money, and the clothes worn did not have to match from head to toe as today, and it was not unusual to see students walking around with holes in their shoes.

Very few students went to college after graduation; 3 or 4 lucky ones would go each year. No scholarships were given then by the school or any other organization. One or two fortunate students had their licenses and

were even more fortunate to have a car of their own. Daddy's car was used only on special occasions, such as the Junior Prom. There were only 2 school buses in those days. Each bus made 2 trips in the morning and at night. Half of the year, students would get home after 4:00 each night. Joseph Stein was one of the first two bus drivers.

Classes started each morning at 9 o'clock and ended promptly at 2:30 p.m. They consisted of six periods of forty minutes each with a ten-minute recess in the morning and afternoon. During the lunch period, which began at noon, warm lunches could be bought that were prepared by the homemaking students under the direction of Miss Helen Mack. Students were allowed to eat out-of-doors in they wished.

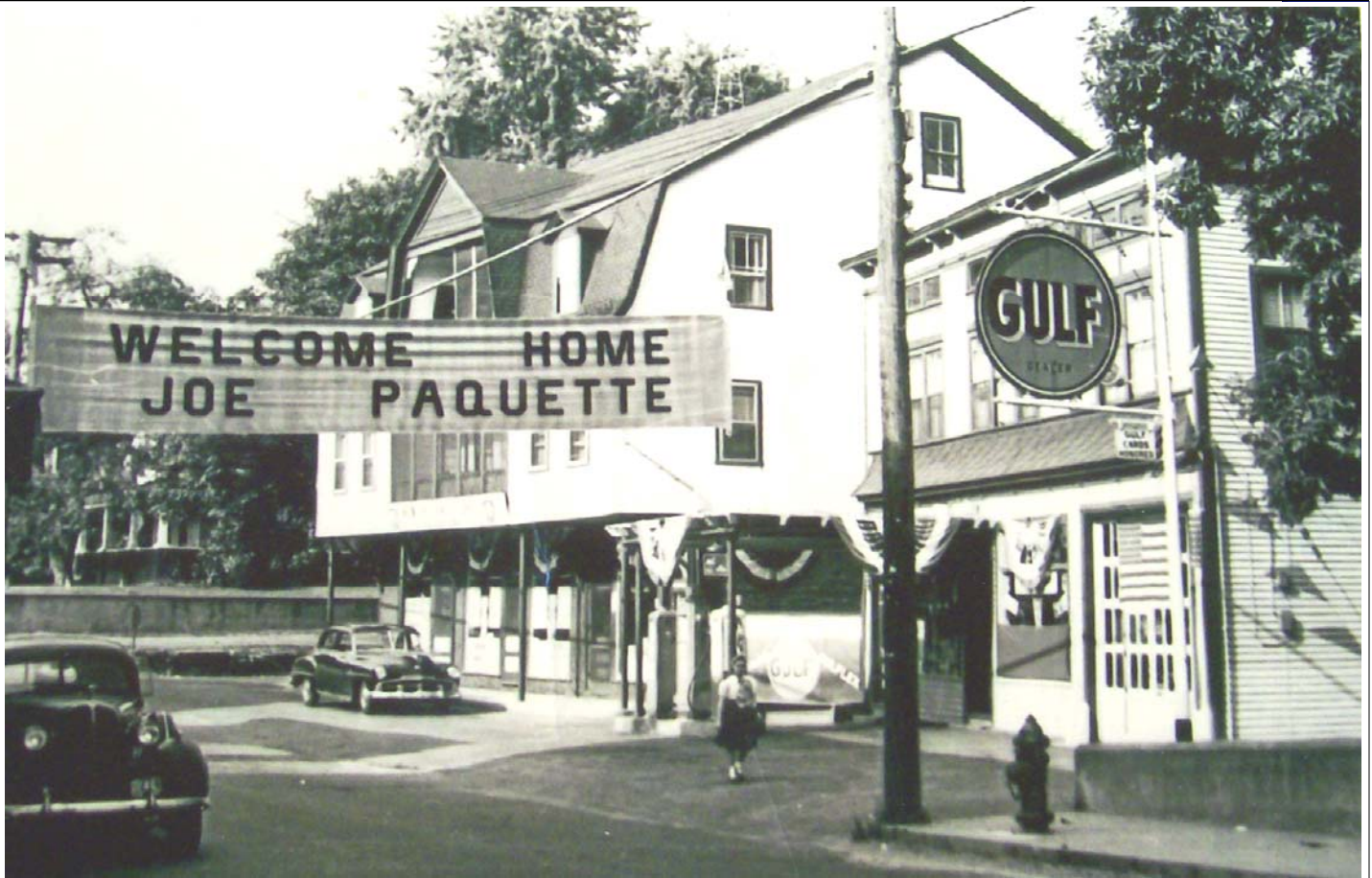
Many times, reckless students would start fires during their lunch period so they could stay outside and fight them instead of going to their afternoon classes.....

There were no year-books then, but there

were class rings. The rings ranged from eight to nine dollar each.

Much emphasis was placed on sports as it is today. Students prepared for sports in the small gym in the high school (the present shop room (ed. note—in 1963)). During their gym period in the winter, students did a few exercises and then split into teams of five and played basketball games of 5 minutes each or until one team scored a designated number of points. In the summer, gym class was held either on the old tennis court or on the hill among the trees and stones where students played mainly baseball. Quite a few of the school's windows were broken when baseball was played on the tennis court. Soccer, girls' field hockey, baseball and girls' and boys' basketball were the major sports of the day.This was the first year that the ball was taken out of bounds after each basket that was made. In 1937, after each basket was made, the ball was taken back for a center jump.

... Let us hope that 25 years from now, someone will relive our days at Tourtellotte.....



Joe Paquette's Parade— Joe was a POW held in N. Korea for several years. No. Grosvenordale celebrated his return after the war. Duhamel's Station on right. Left building held Zeke's Tavern on the right hand side, Talabac's Market in the center and the Havelis Cobbler / Shoe Repair shop. Later, the building was Suprenant's Market. **Below:** Willis Joslin of East Thompson

Elmer White Photo



Ask The Society

Typically, the Thompson Historical Society steers questions relating to family history and genealogy to our friends at the Killingly Historical Society. However, because answers to these questions apply to a wider audience, we have included a few in this issue of the newsletter. These have been collected for a number of years.

Question: Where does the Townsend name originate from?

Answer: It is a British name. Back hundreds of years ago, when villages were small, folks knew each other by their first names only. When there were multiple men using the same first name, say Joe, it was not uncommon to add some local descriptor to help identify the Joe being discussed. Let's say that there were two men named Joe, one who lived by a brook and one who lived out at the edge of town. Joe de la Brooke and Joe de la Towns End, eventually were listed in the town

records at some point as Joe Brook and Joe Townsend. The surname of Townsend is considered a 'local' surname.

Question: What does Cartwright mean?

Answer: For the purposes of this newsletter, Cartwright was the last name (surname) of the family but it also tells us something interesting about the first one to have used the surname of Cartwright. In medieval times, a person could be known by what they did for work. In this case, John the Cartwright, was a man who specialized in making carts. A man who was a baker could be John the Baker, who became John Baker, or John Bakker (because spelling then was more creative). Interestingly, this didn't just apply to men. A female baker was a bakester; (Alice the Bakester) hence the modern name of Baxter. Spinster is a female spinner.

Question: How did the name Horsley originate?

Answer: The answer to this can be considered either a 'local' name or one of 'office'. The ley refers to a sheltered enclosure or field for animals. So Joe Horsley was a person who either had the official position to guard the horses in a specific pasture or simply that was Joe's job. Buckley Hill in Thompson comes to mind. What might the Buckley derive from? It could have been from a King's guardsman over his special deer (buck) hunting grounds. We also have names such as Oakley or Ashley. These might have been tended forests of certain tree-types for building sea vessels, etc... Likewise, we can use -den, and Borden becomes a valley where the boars lived; or Cowden, or Foxden. See 'English Surnames' by Bardsley for fascinating info on name origins.