



The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

www.thompsonhistorical.org

Summer 2001

Calendar of Events

Thursday, June 7: Annual Meeting of the Society

This meeting will be held at the new home of Rob & Sue Vincent, 112 County Home Rd. (Rt. 21). Picnic at 6 PM; Meeting at 7 PM.

We would appreciate an R.S.V.P. by June 1st if you will be attending so we can plan for food. Do you have a special dish or dessert you would like to bring? Contact Sue Vincent at 923-5728.

Antique Roadshow— Do you have an antique that you always wanted to know what it was worth? Mr. Joseph Allard, a local antique expert, will be at the Annual Picnic to appraise your items. Mr. Allard has been an antiques dealer for 40 years, buying and selling in Eastern Connecticut. He has been an auctioneer for 15 years and has taught courses on antiques at Quinebaug Valley Community College. He has presented programs at other Eastern Connecticut historical societies, including Woodstock, Plainfield, Killingly, Columbia and Lebanon.

Mr. Allard will be available between 6 and 7 PM. A donation of \$2.00 per item is requested (for the benefit of the Society). Please bring a chair to relax in and an item or two for Mr. Allard to appraise for you.

The annual meeting agenda includes:

- Review of the year's activities
- Election of board members for the coming year
- Discussion of coming activities
- Progress reports on historical projects, programs, & finance.

This meeting is open to all members. We need members to volunteer for many activities. Find out how you can help the Society.

For directions to the Vincents' home, contact Sue at 923-5728.

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• Nominating Committee:

Sue Vincent has volunteered to serve as chairperson of the Nominating Committee for the 2001—2002 year. All officers as well as Board of Directors will be elected at the Annual Meeting on June 7, 2001.

If you have a suggestion, contact Sue Vincent (923-5728), Jeff Barske (935-5036) or Lucille Barrette (923-5331) from the nominating committee.

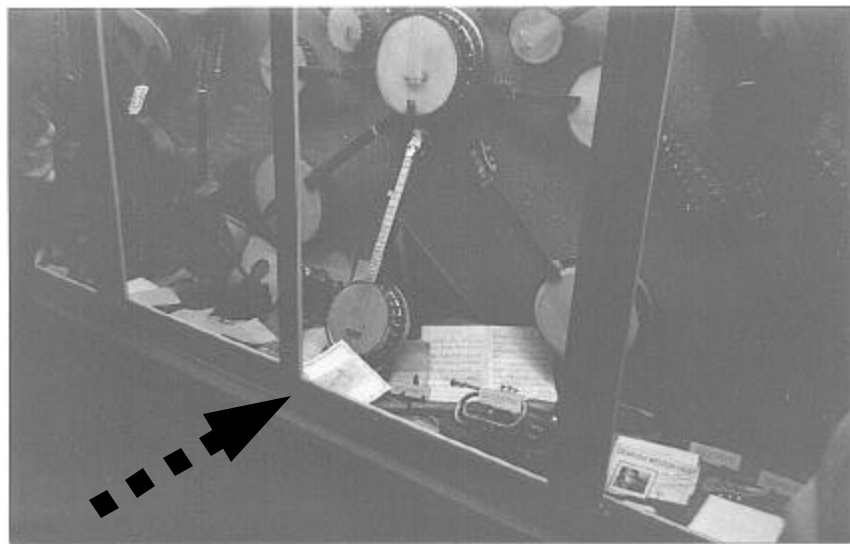
Membership Administration Changes

The Membership Committee has proposed the following changes:

- The Membership Committee is responsible for issuing quarterly newsletters containing the Society's Schedule of Events; 2-3 stories of historical interest, info from the board of directors and articles on historical programs & activities.
- The Summer newsletter will be mailed town wide.

- Membership dues will be changed to:
 - \$10 Individual Membership
 - \$15 Family Membership
 - \$25+ Contributing Membership
 - \$5 Student Membership
- Dues to be paid by July 1st
 - 1st reminder: Summer newsletter
 - 2nd reminder: Fall newsletter

Note: Changes to be voted on at annual meeting



MYSTERY!!— Why would the Roy Acuff Museum at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, TN have a 1979 THS Calendar on display featuring Desire Comeau, bandmaster of the North Grosvenordale French Band, ca. 1900s? WE DON'T KNOW. DO YOU? See photo below.

1994 Photo & mystery courtesy of Hattie Green.



Civil War Letters Coming

John Proctor, from Ivoryton, CT has 52 letters from Henry Washington Brown of E. Thompson written to his father, Benjamin Franklin Brown during his time of service in the Civil War. Written in 1864 while Brown served in Gen. Burnside's units in several engagements in Virginia, the letters describe the battle conditions & situation.

Mr. Proctor, a retired Superintendent of Schools and Civil War historian, is transferring the letters to disk and has offered a copy to the Society. He expects to complete the project by Fall and we hope to have him talk sometime in the Fall about these letters, held by his family since 1864.

It is believed that Brown and his family are buried in the E. Thompson Cemetery. Any Society members with knowledge of the Brown family, please contact Dave Babbitt or Mark Savolis.

Desire Comeau worked as a factory hand at the Grosvenor-Dale Company around the turn of the century. In his off-hours, he was bandmaster of the French Band, one of several marching and performing bands that entertained the locals. Shown here with his baton and horn, and outfitted in his band's marching uniform, Desire led the band for many years.

Walking Weekend—Oct. 6-8

The Society is in need of volunteers to lead walks on Walking Weekend (Oct. 6-8). We have sponsored walks in No. Grosvenordale (The Mill Village Walk); Thompson Hill (The Thompson Ellen Larned Knew) and West Thompson (The Village that Was....).

If anyone is interested in leading these walks, please contact Dave Babbitt immediately @ 935-5196. Arrangements will be made with the appropriate agencies and we will have fulfilled our obligation as a sponsor. Walking Weekend events are held throughout Eastern Connecticut. Thompson is proud to be a participant in the regional activity.



Presentations by the Society

The Society's May 3rd showing of the movie, "The Man in the Net", packed the Old Town Hall.

Clarence Ballard, a Thompson resident who starred in the movie as the deputy sheriff, provided humorous anecdotes about the movie, shot in & around Thompson during the summer of 1958. The primary setting for the movie was his family's farm, then a working dairy farm. Clarence told how they had to quickly milk the cows and hurry the animals over to a distant field to keep the mooing out of the soundtrack.

While the exterior shots of the Ballard Farm were real, Clarence explained that all of the interior shots of the house were shot in Hollywood except for one. Ballard also said his acting was, "comparable to Barney Fife, and felt that for \$22.50/day and a box lunch, it wasn't a bad 5 or 6 days' work, using the word 'work' very loosely". Hollywood also changed the town's name for the movie to Stoneville & added a fake gas station across from the Vernon Stiles Inn.

While the movie was never a major box office success, several notable people were associated with the

film. The star, Alan Ladd, made a number of major films including Shane. The Academy Award winning director, Michael Curtiz, directed mammoth hits "Casablanca", "Yankee Doodle Dandy" and "Life with Father", all now classic films. The leading lady, Carolyn Jones, was best known as Morticia from the Adams Family TV show.

The Society thanks Bob Miller—Aspinock Historical Society, for the newspaper articles, Clarence for the memories and Lucille Barrette for the artifacts and the videotape clips. Thanks to all who attended and shared their stories about the making of the "Man in the Net".

Clean-Up Daya Beginning

The May 19th Clean-Up Day, though thinly attended, accomplished much. The storage room exit way on the east side of the Old Town Hall received a reorganizing, cleaning as well as some 'tossing' that has made the exit accessible and given us extra storage.

The Outhouse now has 3 sides complete with just the backside needing re-siding. A coat of paint and little foundation work should complete the project. Scrap wood was carted off to the transfer station & the area raked.

2 large windows had their metal grilles installed and old newspapers were moved over to the Larned Library.Thanks to all who helped!!

Trip to Lowell Scheduled for Oct. 27, 2001

The Society is offering its members and friends an opportunity to visit the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, MA and Lowell's National Historic Park, Saturday, October 27, 2001. The 47 passenger bus will leave from the Louis P. Faucher Community Center promptly at 9:30 a.m., returning to Thompson by 5 p.m. The cost for this adventure will be \$20/member; \$25/non-members.

The purpose of the trip is to help Thompson residents return to the days of when textiles ruled the valleys of both the French and Quinebaug Rivers. Over 100 exhibits will show the magic of spinning and weaving cotton and wool into finished cloth. Many of us have had brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents who worked the mills and produced cloth in like fashion.

The tour should give those in attendance an opportunity to see the beauty of the finished product and to witness the extraordinary display of fabric

Museum Shop seeks "Theme" Coordinator

Last season, the Museum Shop featured theme-of-the-month exhibits at the Old Town Hall that coincided with the Museum Shop's monthly opening on the first Saturday of the month. We found that the theme-of-the-month exhibits drew many people to the museum shop. As we approach summer, we begin the

planning process for our upcoming programs.

We seek a theme coordinator to organize the theme suggestions and arrange theme presentations for the upcoming Society year. Prior experience not required.....just a willingness to participate and get involved. Call Valentine at 860 923 3776 for details.

and period clothing that the museum has to offer. We'll also visit the "Mill Girl's Boarding House" exhibit at the National Historic Park.

If you are interested in this bus trip, please notify Dave Babbitt at 860 935 5196. Space is limited so don't delay. Call now!!!

The Thompson Historical Society

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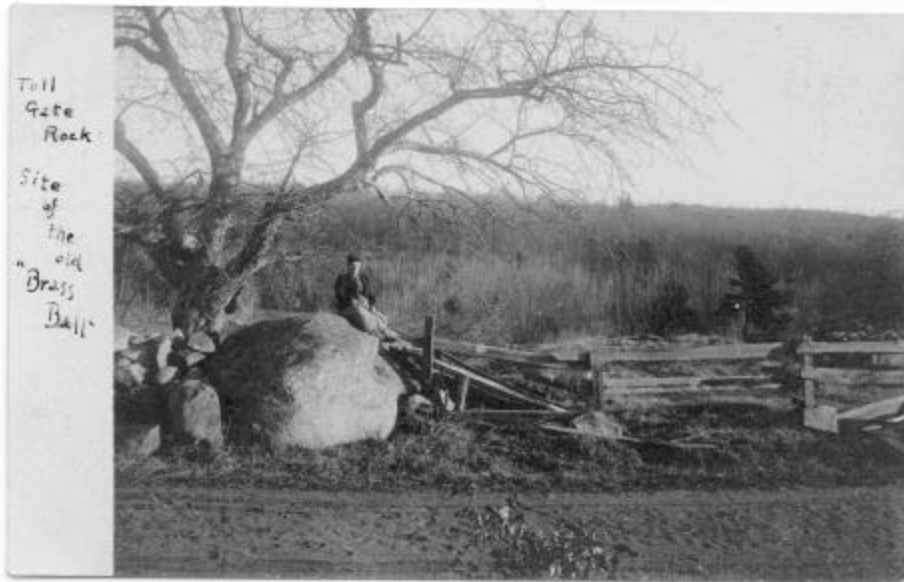
A. David Babbitt, President

The Brass Ball Inn Location Identified

In the last newsletter, we asked our readers if they could locate the site of the old Brass Ball Inn.

Several people have come forward with information about the rock (see photo below).. Jane and Dave Johnson of East Thompson identified the Inn's former spot with Global Positioning System-like precision.....the inn was located just south of the Massachusetts line, on the right hand side of East Thompson Rd. The foundation is barely recognizable today.

The large boulder served as a reminder to all travelers that a toll was to be paid for use of the road, then the Boston to Hartford Turnpike. The time period would be in the late 18th and early 19th century.



At that time, prior to the coming of the railroad, East Thompson, being on the main road from Hartford to Boston had two inns, of which the Brass Ball was one.

We've been told that the town highway department moved the boulder away from the road years ago.....

History Book Sessions Scheduled

The Society and the Thompson Recreation Department will be sponsoring 5 meetings to gather material for the Society's upcoming book on the town. The meetings will have a presentation of old photos of specific villages and will be moderated by people familiar with these areas. The intent is to gather quotes and anecdotes to accompany the photos in the new book.

The five groupings are:

North Grosvenordale / Grosvenordale:
Moderator: Dave Babbitt—July 18th

West Thompson / Mechanicsville:
Moderator: Alice Biesiadecki—July 25th

Quinebaug Fabyan :
Moderators: Peg Babbitt—June 20th

Thompson Hill / Quaddick:
Moderator: Hattie Green—July 11th

East Thompson, / Wilsonville
Moderator: Barbara Weaver—Aug. 1st

All meetings are at the new Thompson Library meeting room from 7—8:30 PM on the dates listed above. Come and participate!!! If you have a good story about a village or person, we could use it for the book.

Please contact Joe Iamartino at 860 923 0151 if you are interested in participating in any capacity on the Thompson History book project.

Membership Dues:

It is once again time to pay THS dues, with July 1st as the renewal date. See the attached flyer for more information. We need your support to keep the Larned Library and the Old Town Hall maintained. Help us financially or with volunteered services. Call Joe at 923 0151 for more information.

Don't forget to visit our website too.....

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