



The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

www.thompsonhistorical.org

Winter 2002

Calendar of Events

Membership meetings or events for the Society.

Sunday, December 1, 2002 at Old Town Hall

Rehearsal schedule for Christmas concert

- Children: 3—3:30 PM
- Women: 3:30—4 PM
- Men & Women: 4—4:30 PM
- Men: 4:30—5 PM

Saturday, December 7, 2002

- *Christmas Concert, 7 PM, Old Town Hall*

Thursday, April 4, 2003

- *Membership Meeting—Program (Samuel Slater, his cloth, his wife & Thompson, CT), and excerpts from the Thompson movie “The Man in the Net”, at 7 PM, Old Town Hall*

Saturday, April 12, 2003

- *Patriots Day—Civil War Re-enactors, old cars & trucks, on Thompson Common*

Thursday, May 1, 2003

- *Membership Meeting—Program: May Day Celebrations, at 7 PM, Old Town Hall*

Saturday, May 17, 2003

- *Huge Society Tag Sale—on Thompson Common*

The following dates are for Board of Director meetings, to be held at the Ellen Larned Memorial Building at 7 PM (unless otherwise stated).

Thursday, November 21, 2002

Thursday, January 16, 2003

Thursday, March 20, 2003

Thursday, April 17, 2003

These meetings are for directors only unless prior arrangements are made.

Museum Shop

- *Come see the new items for sale in our museum shop at the Old Town Hall. We will be open from 10 am—4 pm on the following dates:*

Saturday/Sunday, Nov. 23/24

Saturday/Sunday, Nov. 30/ Dec. 1

Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 7/8

Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 14/15

Saturday, December 21

Sunday, Dec.22— Men’s Emergency Shopping Day—staffed by men

-Do a little shopping & get home in time for Football. 10 AM—12:30 PM

FYI: 2003 Thompson calendars are in. Pick one up for yourself and for family and friends at the Museum Shop.

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Membership Information

Here is a chance to empty out your attics and basements **AND** help the Society. On May 17, 2003, we will have an enormous tag sale on the Thompson Common. You don’t have to wait until then to donate your goods though. Please call Sue at 923-5728 now to arrange for a pickup of those special items.

We’re looking for new members. Do you have ideas on how to bring them in? Call us with your thoughts....923-3200

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, 2002 for 2002-2003 year

- 1st reminder: Summer newsletter

- 2nd reminder: Fall newsletter

Officers / Contact Info:

President: Dave Babbitt

Vice President: Joe Iamartino

Treasurer: Jeffrey Barske

Secretary: John Lengel

Curator: Mark Savolis

Collections: Hattie Green

Photos: Alice Biesiadecki

Museum Shop: Beth Greene, Sue Vincent, Lucille Barrette, Henrietta Panu, Helen Flood, Sandra Warner, June Schoppe, Val Iamartino

Website: Barbara Loy

Museum Committee Chairperson: Barbara Weaver

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Visit our website at:

www.thompsonhistorical.org

or call us at 860-923-3200



We want to use this photo of the North Grosvenordale Schoolhouse in the new book, but no one seems to know what the construction in front of the building was for. If you know why, call us.

Don't forget to sign up for your 192 page soft or hard cover pictorial history book of Thompson available this coming summer. This is a limited pressing and orders are first come, first served. Reserve your copy now. Call 923 3776

The President's Quill by A. David Babbitt

On behalf of the Board of Directors and myself, it is a pleasure to extend holiday greetings to all of the members of the Society.

Fall '02 has been a very busy time for our Society. There are several hard-working committees functioning on our behalf:

The Museum Committee, led by chairperson Barbara Weaver, is advancing in their pursuit to provide a permanent museum at the Ellen Larned Memorial Building. They plan to be open to the public on the first Saturday of the month and on special days throughout the year. The Society has collected, under the leadership of Hattie Green, a substantial amount of Thompson memorabilia and, with the assistance of outside consultants, is determining the best way to display the collection.

I never cease to be amazed at the tid-bits of information we receive on a regular basis. Our editor Joe Iamartino continues to scan and record the photos, articles and artifacts that people present to us. It is going to be very exciting for all of us to be able to see this vast collection in our new museum. Once our

materials are properly inventoried and catalogued, a huge undertaking, displays will be established and this wonderful collection will be shared with all. This is a real and attainable goal that our current Museum Committee is striving to meet.

The building committee, led by Jane Vercelli, has made a real commitment to solve a variety of problems our old and fragile buildings continue to present to us. Roofs on both the Ellen Larned Memorial (ELM) Building and the Old Town Hall have issues and are being addressed. Water at the Old Town Hall should be solved this month through the efforts of Trudeau Plumbing, "Waldo" Duquette Excavating and the cooperation of the Tanson family. Gerry Beaupre has installed a historically-correct light post in front of the ELM and will renew the lawn in the spring.

The Museum Shop Committee has a most remarkable collection of holiday gifts for

sale at the Old Town Hall. The variety is the greatest in the history of our shop. We have a real "gem" here and I urge all to support the committee's efforts between now and Christmas. You won't be disappointed.

Programs offered this Fall have not been well-attended. Are we doing something wrong? We need your input and urge our members to get involved in our Program Committee. Please contact me 923 3200 and I'll gladly help you get involved in our work.

How do we display the date marker from the Grosvenordale Mill? How do we honor all of the workers who toiled there? The Society will have this awesome responsibility soon. We need your help to ensure that the owners who created the mill and the workers who made up the village and worked on the factory floors for over 100 years are appropriately remembered. Ideas please!

Finally, we are beginning to organize for the 2003-2004 Calendar year. I will name a nominating committee in January. Do you have a desire to serve? Please contact me if you do—923 3200.

May we continue to promote the historical interest of Thompson in 2003. Merry Christmas to all!



For that “Doubting Thomas” out there who called last week and for anyone else who still doesn’t believe that the St. Joseph’s Rectory had a floor added, here is the visual proof. No photo manipulation of any type was used to create these two photos. Not sure of the date, though.



Mystery Photo

This old millwork photo came from the mother of Cliff Greene, and is possibly from Quadic. We need help identifying the place, people and date.

Answer to Fall Mystery photo:

Joseph "Duffy" Lafontaine, a former selectman, and owner of a bakery & catering company, is probably taking a town baseball team to a game, according to Dave Babbitt.



1940 Christmas Party at the Athletic Club, now the Knights of Columbus building on Rt. 12. Prior to this, the building was a horse barn for the Grosvenordale Company with a sister cow barn across the street.



The Old Bridge in Quinebaug c1912—Photo: Betty Leclair



The Howe-Marot girl's school on Rt. 21 had plenty of space for horse skiing as shown here in this 1940 photograph.

Paradis Block—North Grosvenordale circa 1906

Former Thompson residents, Lester and Annie Ruth, have contributed many photos and documents to our digital archives, including this rare 1906 postcard of the Paradis Block. The Block sat where the new Thompson Library now stands and included stores, a theatre, a bowling alley and apartments. It was torn down in the 1970s following a fire.



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Henry Paradis,
North Grosvenor Dale, Conn.

Chas. Johnson Co. The McIntyre
Dry Goods Co.

Published by the McIntyre Dry Goods Company
Putnam, North Grosvenor Dale, Conn.

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Society News

A booklet of Yankee Magazine stories about Thompson is now on sale at the Museum Shop.

Holiday baked goods available for purchase on December 14th & 15th at the Museum Shop.

We thank Cub Scout Pack 66 Webe-los II, Wayne Tanson and Joel Si-erro, Den leader, for their commu-nity service project to rake the leaves and take care of the grounds at the Old Town Hall.

Q. What does the P&H in the Grange Flag at the Old Town Hall mean?

A. From the National Grange website, the P&H letters in the logo mean that they are the fraternal Order of the Patrons of Husbandry. Husbandry implies farming and ag-riculture as well as self-reliance, and careful use of resources.

Q. Who was the last Civil War veteran in Thompson?

A. Alonzo Stephens, born July 4, 1840 lived to be about 100. He fought at Gettysburg, and, during the battle, a horse kicked him in the face and broke his nose. He attended the 75th Anniversary of the Battle at Gettysburg at the invitation of the U.S. Government, and was the only local soldier to do so. Stephens came to Thompson from Providence in 1874 & married Jane Robbins, a local girl, in 1883.

Ask the Society— Questions on Thompson History

Q. Who were the Holy Jumpers & how do they figure in Thompson's mill history?

A. Religion is one of those topics that can stir up controversy like no other. Our answer will be non-denomenational. Around the turn of the last century, Mr. Messenger, the powerful mill agent for the Grosvenor-Dale Company, belonged to a religious sect called the Holy Jumpers. According to the authors of the Emanuel Lutheran Church 75th anniversary booklet, he at-tempted to convert the immigrant Swedish Lutherans to his re-ligion. The Swedes completely resisted the efforts of their influ-ential boss to convert them, led by their resolute Reverend. To help us better understand who the Jumpers were, we'll quote Edward A. Ross, from his book "The Laws of Conventional Imitation", Macmillan Co., NY 1919:

"...about 1740 in Welsh revivals, religious frenzy in some persons assumed the form of jumping. Their example infected onlookers, and finally, in that district, jumping became the characteristic example of religious ecstasy..."

In North America, there were a number of cults and groups that jumped, laughed uproarishly, swayed, rolled on the floor or sat silent as a form of religious expression. These forms of religious expression were not considered deviant, perhaps odd, and today, many modern religions have similar forms of inspired behavior. The Holy Jumpers were one of these groups, but should not to be confused with the contem-porary but religiously-odd, sexually-creative Holy Roller cult.

Q. Samuel Slater is called the Father of the American Industrial Revolution and the American cotton industry. Did he start the Thompson mills ?

A. He is connected, sort of. When he left Great Britain in 1789, he had the concept of yarn-making in his brain from his experi-ences in the factories in Derbyshire. He partnered with the fa-mous Moses Brown in Rhode Island & constructed a successful yarn-spinning company. While in Rhode Island, he lived with Oziel Wilkinson, a blacksmith with many children. Slater mar-ried Oziel's daughter Hannah in 1791. Oziel and sons were adept at iron & steel-making, so Samuel brought them into busi-ness with him & had advanced spinning machines built by them. The entire family formed, in Thompson, a company at Cargill Falls in 1806, now within Putnam. Slater and his ex-tended family controlled major areas of the Webster, MA & Thompson, CT area & this became one of the dominant produc-tion centers in America. Webster MA was originally Slatersville for example. Read the book *Historical Connections* by Holmes Ammidown, 1874 (Heritage Books, Bowie MD) for more info.