



# Thompson Historical Society Spring Newsletter



## President's Quill By Joe Lamartino



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My Memorial Day thoughts. Each of us views our life and town differently. This view hangs as we age, with memories adding to the altered scenery. Older folks can stand at a particular location and be hit with a flood of thoughts—the people, and the events that occurred there, in the directional stream of a lifetime.

Some folks are content to float with the current, observing as they go. Others paddle furiously against the flow. Most think mainly of today's survival. A rare few care to influence the flow, to make changes that may help those that follow us.

What is the value of history really? Writing down great grandma's recipe for a

cake that will never be used again? To put an arrowhead under lights for an audience who does not come to see it? To have a beautiful photograph of your father's birthday party in 1951 that is sitting in a shoebox? To own an un-played video of your dad scribing his WW II pilot experiences? For some people, this is one definition of the value of history.....musty things rarely or never used or remembered.

One measure of a historical society is to encourage a better balance of the needs for preservation and remembrance against the needs of today. We must represent those now silent in people. They are still with us.

(See President Page 2)

(President Cont'd)

The next time there is a historical call to action, consider that you are composed of the genes of those people and soil of those past places and inevitably, you will be a memory too. No one is asking anyone to dedicate all of his life to remembering past lives. Consider only how you can honor those memories now by your current decisions and actions before you become a memory yourself. Use the history that exists all around you and find creative ways to integrate it into your current life, buildings and stories. Make "it" a bigger part of our town in every way possible. This will keep THOMPSON as that memorable place in all our hearts.

## THOMPSON

*October 2, 1889*

EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY—The eightieth birthday of Mrs. Franklin Bixby was celebrated at her home in Thompson, Ct., on Monday, Sept. 23rd, 1889. She was happily surprised by a visit from her children, who kindly remembered her with gifts. Assembled at the dinner table were four generations Mr and Mrs E.Y. Bixby and family, Mr and Mrs Geo. E. Bixby and family, of Providence, Mr and Mrs Charles W. Chamberlin, of Worcester and Mr and Mrs Marvn E. Bixby and family. A poem was read suitable to the occasion.

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### **\*\*\*UPCOMING EVENTS\*\*\***

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## **\*\*\*\*\*MARK YOUR CALENDAR\*\*\*\*\***

**September 24, 2016**

**11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Walktober!**

Come join us for a tour of the beautiful Thompson Common and hear the stories about the noted homes and buildings in the area.

You will hear a talk about the women of Thompson in our historic Old Town Hall and a visit to our new exhibit for 2016. "Women of Thompson—Hill, Mills & Farms" at the Larned Museum. This is an easy 1/2 mile stroll.

We are very fortunate to have Mary Lycan join us to give us a presentation on "Bessie", a daughter of a Thompson Clergyman of the eighteenth century!!!

## The Ladies Tea - A Great Success!!!



On Saturday, June 4th the Thompson Historical Society sponsored the fund raising event "Ladies Tea & Tour" at the quaint half house known as Pear Tree Cottage.

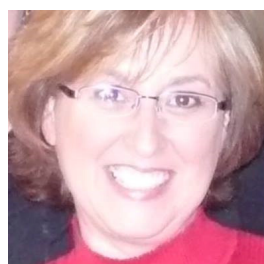
The days event included a cream tea, tour of the house and herb garden. Unlike a high tea, a cream tea is taken with scones, clotted cream and jam. The ladies finished their afternoon with a visit to the new exhibit, "Women of Thompson - Hill, Mills and Farms at the Ellen Larned Museum on the Thompson Common.

Plans are underway for next year's tea. If you would like to be included in the invitation list please send your mailing information to Sue Vincent at greystonefarm2003@yahoo.com.

The exhibit "Women of Thompson" is open for your visit most Sundays by chance from 10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

Also, please join us for the walking week-end event, "Walktober", that will be held September 24, 2016, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

\*\*\*A big thank you to Sue Vincent for Hosting the Ladies Tea on your beautiful property!\*\*\*



## THANK YOU!

The Thompson Historical Society would like to thank JoAnn Witkowski-Thorstenson for her many years and hard work on our newsletter! She did a fantastic job. Now it is time for her to just sit back and enjoy her grandbabies! Thank you JoAnn!



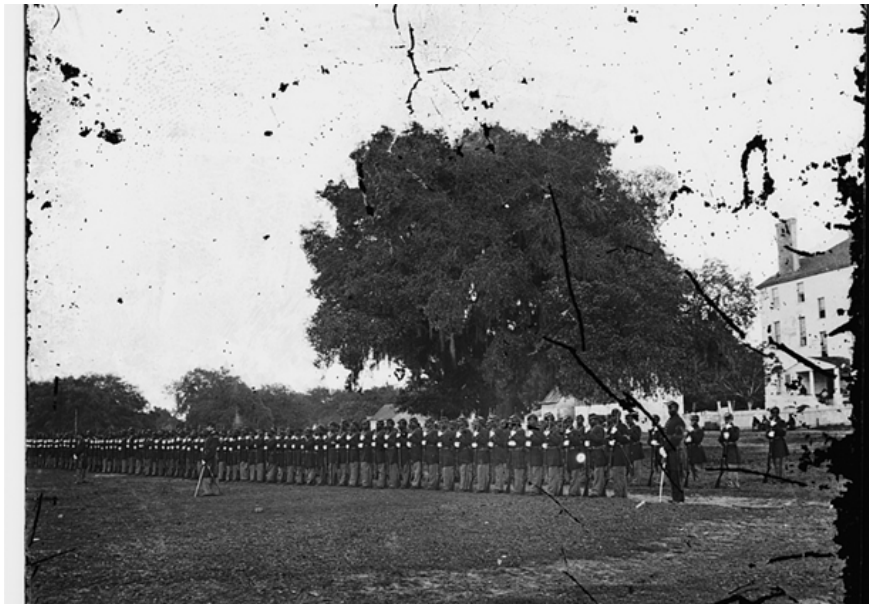
## CIVIL WAR

The THS archive team hit historical pay dirt recently when cataloguing the Dr. Paine Collection. Part of the collection, originally thought to be the Civil War quartermaster records of the 26<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Infantry Volunteers (November 1862-August 1863), turned out to be much more. The collection, most likely gathered by Dr. Paine's father John M. Paine who served with the 26<sup>th</sup> Infantry, contained a plethora of records, letters, and orders, some of which are telling us a very interesting story.

John M. Paine, from Woodstock, volunteered as a 90-day enlistee during the onset of the war, but remained in the service after his short three-month enlistment expired. Initially a corporal, he was promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant by President Abraham Lincoln and made a company commander. From our initial examination of the letters and records left behind, it seems the 1LT Paine became disheartened with fellow soldiers who demonstrated little tolerance for the slaves or the abolitionist movement, something common during war. As a result of wanting to do more, the records indicate that Paine may have requested a transfer to the 29<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Infantry Volunteers, the first colored regiment in Connecticut. The record shown below, lists 58 men of 1LT Paine's Company and their initial uniform and equipment issue. Many of the men could not write and left an "X" as their mark.

According to *Civil War; Volunteer Sons of Connecticut*, written by Blaikie Hines, the 29<sup>th</sup> Connecticut Infantry Volunteers mustered in August 1863 under the command of Colonel William Wooster. They participated in a number of skirmishes and battles and suffered 388 casualties. Six Thompson men served with the 29<sup>th</sup> to include Henry Brown, George Curtiss, Lewis Daily, Thomas Lathrop, Marcus Lewis and Stephen Lewis.

The Paine family settled in this America during the 1600s. John M. Paine was from what is now known as the Paine district of Thompson/Woodstock. His son Dr. John Child Paine was a beloved physician in the Town of Thompson for many years. His generosity and bedside manner is noted in a number of Thompson stories and documents.



*The 29<sup>th</sup> CT Volunteer Infantry. (Library of Congress)*

### 2015-2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SCHEDULE

**September 16, 2016** at ELM

**November 16, 2016** at

Thompson Library (Room 3)

**March 15, 2017** at

Thompson Library (Room 3)

**April 12, 2017** at

Thompson Library (Room 3)

**May 17, 2017** at ELM

**June 6, 2017** at Greystone Farm

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Archiving the many thousands of documents, photographs and artifacts at the ELM was a multi-year project. The team is just now entering the final steps of Phase I which is cataloguing and documenting each of the items and storing them in archival grade sleeves and boxes. The team, headed by THS Chief Archivist and Executive Team Member, Mark Snay, also included Kathy Welch, Lisa Berg, and Joe Iamartino.

It will take some time before we truly understand the significance of the Paine Civil War collection. The THS has already contacted several Connecticut Civil War experts and the Connecticut 29<sup>th</sup> Colored Regiment C.V. Inc., a group of the 29<sup>th</sup>'s decedents. To learn more about the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry see: [www.conn29th.org/history.htm](http://www.conn29th.org/history.htm)

### **WHAT WAS THE EARLIEST LIBRARY IN THOMPSON, CT**

Most residents are familiar with the present day Library and community center, opened in 1994, located on Route 12 in North Grosvenordale. Prior to that, the first meeting of the Thompson Public Library was held at the home of Miss Ellen Larned in February 1898, this being the start of what was to become the Thompson Public Library. In 1901, on Thomson Hill, erection of the Tudor style stone and tile building was started and in 1902 opened to the public. This building is currently used by THS as the Ellen Larned Museum. During the mid 20th century, we also had the addition of a satellite library in North Grosvenordale and one in Quinebaug. What many may not know, is the Thompson Fire Engine Company had their own lending library, which existed before the 1902 library was started. The following is an excerpt from the "Thompson Bicentennial Memory Book 1785-1985", describing this particular library:

*"The Windham County Gazette, a newspaper published at the arcade building on Thomson Hill of 1/28/1836, advertised the Thompson Circulating Library as a private experiment at the suggestion of many persons. It's 200 volumes were available at the arcade building for a yearly fee of \$2.00. The experiment undoubtedly failed, as the Thompson Fire Engine Co. again organized a Town Library on 1/15/1855. Housed in the engine house which stood in the back of the old stone bank on Thompson Hill, it was a spirited venture of the firemen for many years. In 1890 the firemen voted to auction the entire library."*

According to page 668 of "Report of the Federal Security Agency: Office of Education", Published 1872, this library was one of thirteen principle libraries in the state of Connecticut at the time of the reports being published, was founded in 1850 and contained 800 volumes. Some of these books were a part of the original 1369 books that were first cataloged into the Thompson Public Library. Many books from this collection are currently in possession of THS and have recently been cataloged.

For Many years it was thought that this was the earliest library located within Thompson—until new evidence recently came to light. During the process of cataloging the many items we have received from our many gracious donors, we came across a book which is inscribed inside the cover Methodist L. L. Library, West Thomson Ct. 1846. Since the date inscribed within this book is earlier than that of the Fire Engine Company, we now have evidence that there may have been a library in Thompson as early as 1846, leaving us to ask "What was the earliest library in Thompson, CT? Just one more mystery to add to the long list we are already researching....

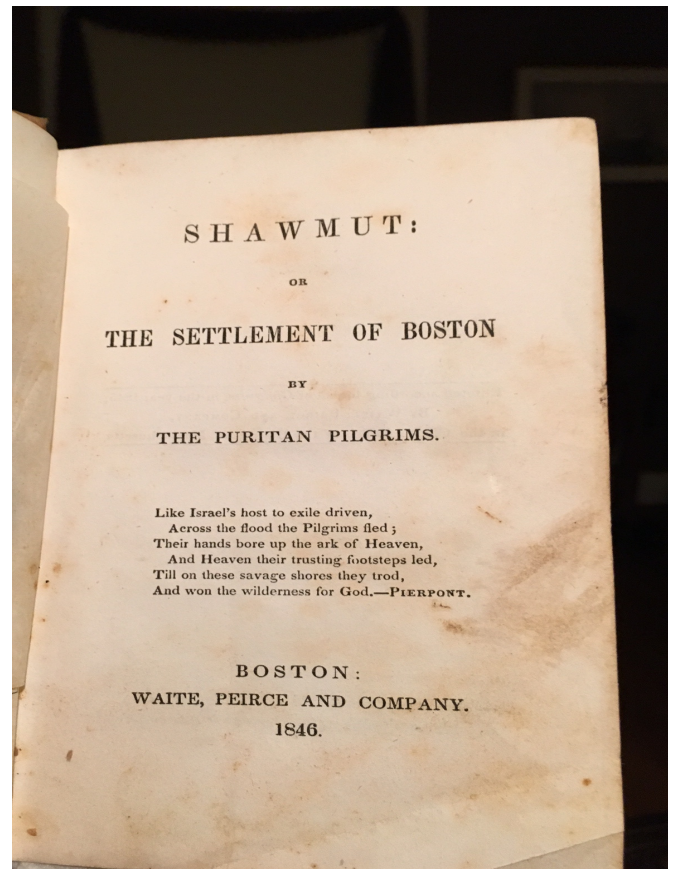
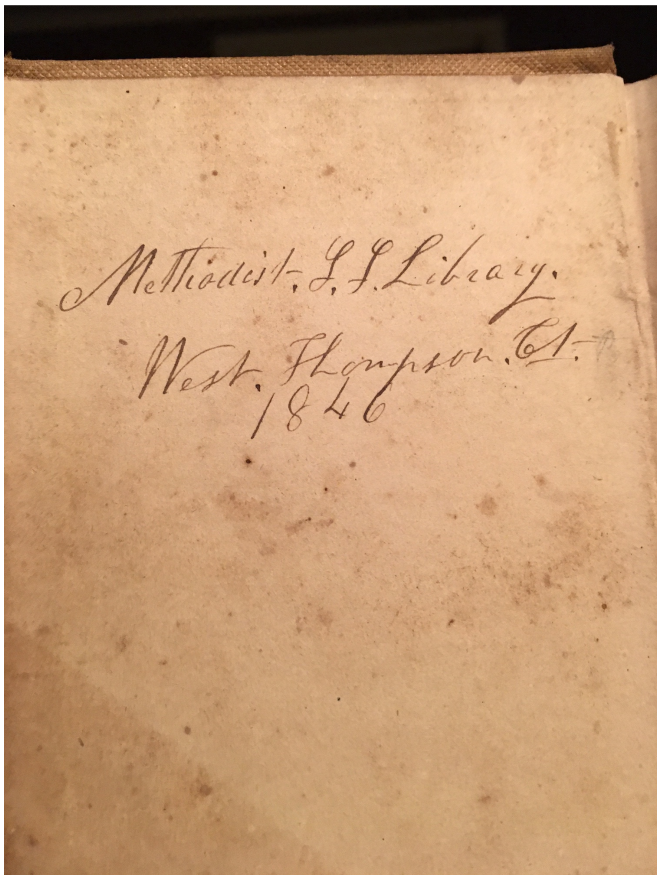


## CAN YOU HELP THE THOMPSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION?

*Carolyn Werge, Conservation Officer*

There appears to be a small, inconspicuous old cemetery with field stones for grave markers located on the westerly side of North Grosvenordale Pond, north of the Knights of Columbus Hall. Some Commission members recalled stories about an old Indian cemetery when there was a Boy Scout camp in that vicinity, however, we have been unable to find anyone with information about the cemetery origins.

Could you please reach out to your members. Someone may have knowledge about this old cemetery that they can share with us.



The Thompson Historical Society  
P.O. Box 47  
Thompson, CT 06277  
[www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)  
**Address Correction Requested**



## **THOMPSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOAD OF DIRECTORS**

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Joe Lindley— Vice President  
Sue Vincent— Treasurer  
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Lucille Barrette  
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Dr. Chris Wagner  
Paul Hughes  
Jon Brynga  
John Rice  
Abe Gustavson  
Ginny Flood  
Roberta Baublitz

### **July 2016-June 2017 Membership**

Mail to: Thompson Historical Society  
Attn: Membership  
PO Box 47  
Thompson CT 06277

Contributing Membership: \$25.00

Individual Membership: \$10.00

Family Membership: \$15.00

Members are invited to purchase first year  
memberships for new members for \$5.00

**\*\*Please Check Your Newsletter Label For Our Membership Info. See Website for More Information On Fees. \*\***

**THS Contact Info—[jiamartino@charter.net](mailto:jiamartino@charter.net) (860) 923-3776**

**VISIT US ON THE WEB AT [WW.THOMPSONHISTORICAL.COM](http://WW.THOMPSONHISTORICAL.COM)**