



Thompson Historical Society Spring Newsletter

President's Quill By Joe Iamartino



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Mark Snay has invested many hundreds if not thousands of hours working behind the scenes at the Museum. Not only is he the Society's archivist but he is a gifted researcher as well.

What motivates Mark to get up early on Sundays to work in the archives of the Society? Besides the opportunity to work with his sister Lisa, Mark loves the thrill of the hunt. Getting his start metal detecting with his mom and dad, Mark's historical curiosity drives him on. He also likes to organize and has claimed at times that his OCD has taken over his body. These factors together make him a great historical archivist.

Sometimes, his researching brings him historical gold as it did recently with the Jacobs Tavern Clock. After many years, the 270+ year old clock made its way back to Thompson, thanks to two sets of generous people, the Bells from Tennessee who restored the clock, and the anonymous donors who paid for the clock. Mark's research was the catalyst for the clock's eventual return.

The legendary English clock is now a featured exhibit in our town's museum. All because of Mark. Thank you for doing what you do for all of us.



Above: Mark Snay and Mr. & Mrs. Bell, with the Jacobs Tavern Single Handed CA 1740 Clock made in London



THOMPSON
July 31, 1889

Miss Emma Shaw started her trip to Victoria, British Columbia, last Friday, and expects to take a yacht trip up the pacific to Alaska. Rev S. A. Ivies takes a short vacation at Hampton Beach, N.H., with relatives and friends. (Clipping from unknown newspaper dated 1889)

Thompson's Soldiers Not Forgotten

Over the past six years, the Thompson Historical Society has been searching for the names of all the soldiers, airmen, marines and sailors from Thompson, Connecticut who served during the Revolutionary War, The War of 1812, The Civil War, World War I, and World War II. The *Thompson, Connecticut Men and Women Who Served in the Armed Forces* project has, so far, amassed the names of more than 1,300 men and women who served. The list includes 76 who died in combat or as a result of war.

The project team has exhausted all the typical sources and are now relying on family records, newspaper articles, and personal military records to finish the project. Team leader Joe Lindley reported that "Completion of the project might take years as we discover more and more personal records."

One notable item that stood out to the research team was the amount of families that had multiple family members serving at the same time during time of war. "It must have been excruciating for the family left at home in Thompson. Some of the families, especially during the Revolutionary War and WWII had as many as five brothers serving," stated Lindley.

So far, the team has gathered 119 names of men who served in the Revolutionary War, 91 in the War of 1812, 262 in the Civil War, 156 in World War I and 704 in WWII.

The list is now posted on the Thompson Historical Society's website found at: www.thompsonhistorical.org. If anyone has any additions, comments or corrections, please Email them to: joelindley119@hotmail.com.



Above: Colonel John E. Tourtellotte, Commander 4th Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Colonel Tourtellotte was severely wounded October 1864 during the battle of Allatoona Pass. For his heroic defense of critical supplies, General Sherman stated that Colonel Tourtellotte "earned my everlasting respect." Tourtellotte finished his military career as Sherman's Chief of Staff. The two men became good friends. Picture compliments of the THS.

NEXT
BOARD OF
DIRECTORS MEETING

September 6, 2017 at the ELM

Ramsdell Engine #9 up and Running Again!

The Ramsdell Transportation collection, generously donated to THS by Dale King, has been meticulously catalogued by noted researchers Bob Belletzkic, Tom Chase and others. With the completion of the restoration work of the Ramsdell Engine 9 by the WW&F Rail Museum in Alna ME, both the Thompson Historical Society and the WW&F Rail Museum are collaborating on a video documentary on the engine and the Ramsdell story.

Blair Cole, our documentary director, has filmed interviews in CT and ME as well as the special August 3rd running of Engine #9 with wonderful video of the scenery along the restored tracks, the station house, engine turntable and staff activities in Maine. Other CT folks contributed on film crews 2 and 3 including Geoff Bolte (aerial / drone filming), Tom Chase, Joe Lindley, and Burt Rhodes (still, Go-Pro and video camera work work) and Mark Snay as rail flag control commander. Darlene Snay's acting debut as a passenger on the vintage train was unforgettable.

THS is in communication with Connecticut and Maine PBS about airing the documentary. For information about the upcoming documentary, please contact Joe Iamartino at josephiamartino@gmail.com



AN 1895 MYSTERY: DID HE GET AWAY WITH MURDER?



In the mid 1890's, a man calling himself Jerry Staskiewicz (or Staskowicz), born 1859 in Russian Poland, and his wife, Rosa, moved to a dilapidated old farm at the Southeast end of Webster Lake one-quarter mile from the old Thompson Road. Their small farm was in one of the most remote, desolate and lonely parts around the lake. It sat on top of a hill with a quagmire of a swamp in front of it. It was lived in and was possibly built by Deacon John Joslin in the early 1800's. It was also called Blackmer Farm and the Morrisey Place. The farm did not support Jerry, Rosa, Vigli (her 7-year-old son from a previous marriage, whom Jerry reportedly detested), a 2 year old and an infant of less than 6 month, and Rosa took a job several miles North up Thompson Road at the Slater East Village Mill. Jerry drove her to work every day with the family horse and buggy. English was a second language for Jerry and he spoke little of it, speaking mostly Polish.

On Sunday, January 13, 1895, Jerry presented himself to his nearest neighbor, Joseph Pluta

(his wife's brother-in-law), asking him to give Rosa a ride to work Monday as his horse had died. Jerry returned Monday with his two youngest children and told Mrs. Pluta that his wife and her son were gone; they had supposedly left him, would she take the children. Rosa was also missed at her work, having left \$10 in wages uncollected. Nine days following Jerry's visit to Mr. Pluta, the Webster Police were alerted to the missing woman and her son.

Although the farm was technically over the line in East Thompson, the Webster Sheriff made an official visit and what he found was a dead horse in the yard with a dog feeding on the exposed entrails. A cow, her calf, and a goat in the attached barn were fairly well kept, unlike the 5-room house which was an absolute shambles. They found the robust, 44-year-old Jerry, alone, cooking potatoes in the tea kettle. The house was a midden and the floor and walls were splattered with blood. When questioned, Jerry

said all the blood was from killing chickens inside the house! Police found a blood-stained flat iron in the house. First, Jerry said his wife went back to Poland as she was tired of living on the farm, then he said she had run off with another man while he had been at the Pluta farm arranging for her to get to work. Then he said he did not know. Jerry expressed no interest in what had become of her.

In the yard police found the buggy with blood on the back curtain. None of Rosa's clothing was missing. A dress stained with blood was found in the house, as well as a man's blood-stained trousers and underclothing, and several rags that looked as if they had been used to try to clean the floor. One area of the floor appeared to have had a heavy weight dragged through the blood. A bloody handprint was found on a wall by a police expert from Hartford, who tested the blood and called it human.

Jerry was arrested on suspicion of murder and kept in jail in Thompson for almost a year while police gathered evidence. Jerry insisted Rosa was "gone". Nothing else.

Investigation showed that before coming to the Webster area, Jerry had been known as a cruel and violent man who had attempted to kill Rosa once before while living in Worcester, but had been stopped by interviewing neighbors. Police dug up almost every square inch of Jerry's farm looking for Rosa and Vigli, but absolutely nothing was found. Without bodies, murder could not be proven, even though to a man the police felt he was guilty. Mrs. Kirby at the time Rosa and Vigli went missing remembered seeing a horse and sleigh coming across the frozen and snow-covered lake from the direction of Jerry's farm, wondering why anyone was out in such cold and awful weather.

Jerry was finally released, still maintaining his silence. The surviving children had gone with Rosa's sister in Webster and their names were changed. No relatives ever heard from Rosa or her son.

The farm was never lived in again. It became known as the "Murder House" and by the 1930's only a cellar hole remained. It was said to be haunted. The swamp nearby became known as Jerry's Swamp, where some thought the bodies may have disappeared. It is still called Jerry's Swamp.

Jerry Staskiewicz remained in Webster, boarding at various homes, working as a carder, taking odd jobs, smoking his pipe and never speaking to anyone. He never remarried.

He applied for admission to the Webster Town Infirmary (Poor Farm) in 1919. There he remained mute, answering in only monosyllables if spoken to, and performing odd jobs.

And then in 1934, two men walking on what had become Second Island bathing beach decided to pry up a shiny white stone on the beach: It was a skull! Exam of the skeleton by the medical examiner showed a 30-year-old woman, 5 feet 6 inches in height, with a right-sided skull fracture. It was estimated the body had been buried about 40 years. Vigli was never found. Police suspected Jerry had transported the bodies down the same road he drove over daily and buried them on Second Island, a then unvisited spot, and that the lapping of the lake water as it rose and fell exposed the grave. Twice when police visited Jerry at the Infirmary to question him about the

bones, he ran to the barn and emerged with a pitchfork to drive them off.

Rosa's sister from Worcester tried unsuccessfully to identify the remains. It was hoped a dental malformation could be connected with Rosa, but...no. After repeated ploys by police to get Jerry to give up his secrets, the unidentified bones were buried. At the mention of Rosa all police got from Jerry was an angry expression and a stream of invective against the woman.

Unless Jerry could be convinced to tell the story of what happened in the farmhouse years ago, police were again stymied. Then

on May 8, 1935 Jerry Staskiewicz died. He was buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery in Webster, most likely in a pauper's grave. There were no mourners. Even after 16 years at the Infirmary he had made not one friend. Pallbearers were the funeral wagon attendants. There had been no hope for a deathbed confession. He took his secrets to his grave. Did he get away with murder?

The case remains unsolved.

(Linda K Branniff, with thanks to THS and Marilyn Labbe of Killingly Historical Society)

CONNECTICUT MINIMUM PRICES for BEER and ALE

PLUS BOTTLE OR CASE DEPOSIT AND CONNECTICUT SALES TAX

	12 OZ. BOTTLES		12 OZ. CANS		12 OZ. N. R.*		16 OZ. BOTTLES		16 OZ. CANS		32 OZ. BOTTLES	
	SINGLE	CASE	SINGLE	CASE	SINGLE	CASE	SINGLE	CASE	SINGLE	CASE	SINGLE	CASE
RUPPERT BEER	.17	3.92	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.49	.19	4.42	.20	4.70	.24 $\frac{1}{2}$	5.74	.40	4.70
RUPPERT DARK	.18	4.16	.20 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.73							.42	4.94
JACOB RUPPERT ALE	.17	3.92	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.49							.40	4.70
BALLANTINE BEER	.17	3.92	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.50	.19	4.42	.20	4.70	.24 $\frac{1}{2}$	5.74	.40	4.70
BALLANTINE ALE	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.58	.21	5.00	.21	4.84			.26	6.17	.45	5.18
BLATZ	.17	3.92	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.49	.19	4.42			.24 $\frac{1}{2}$	5.74	.40	4.70
BUDWEISER	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.65	.21	5.00	.21	5.00			.26	6.20	.47	5.60
CARLING BEER	.16 $\frac{1}{2}$	3.85	.18 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.31	.18	4.19	.20	4.70			.38	4.45
CARLING ALE	.19	4.50	.21	4.84	.21	4.84	.22	5.08			.44	5.08
FITZ BEER • ALE	.13 $\frac{1}{2}$	3.20	.16	3.75	.16	3.84	.17 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.09			.33 $\frac{1}{3}$	4.00
HAMPDEN BEER	.14 $\frac{1}{2}$	3.52	.16 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.00	.17	4.00	.19	4.50			.33 $\frac{1}{3}$	4.00
HAMPDEN ALE	.16	3.70	.18	4.20	.17	4.00					.38	4.45
HULL'S BEER • ALE	.16	3.68	.18 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.31	.16 $\frac{1}{2}$	3.85	.19	4.46			.38	4.43
IRISH CREAM ALE	.17	3.92	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.49							.40	4.70
KRUEGER BEER	.15	3.45	.16 $\frac{1}{2}$	3.85	.16 $\frac{1}{2}$	3.80	.17 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.10	.24	5.64	.33 $\frac{1}{3}$	4.00
KRUEGER ALE	.18	4.19	.20 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.73	.20	4.64	.21	4.84	.26	6.10	.42	4.89
MILLER HIGH LIFE	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.65	.21	5.00	.21	5.00			.26	6.20	.47	5.60
NARRAGANSETT BEER • ALE	.17	3.92	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.49	.19	4.42	.20	4.70	.23	5.40	.40	4.70
PABST BEER • ALE	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.65	.21	5.00	.21	5.00			.26	6.20	.47	5.60
PIELS	.17	3.92	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.49	.19	4.42	.20	4.70	.24 $\frac{1}{2}$	5.74	.40	4.70
RHEINGOLD BEER • ALE	.17	3.92	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.49	.19	4.42	.20	4.70	.24 $\frac{1}{2}$	5.74	.40	4.70
SCHAEFER	.17	3.92	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.49	.19	4.42	.20	4.70	.24 $\frac{1}{2}$	5.74	.40	4.70
SCHLITZ	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.65	.21	5.00	.21	5.00			.26	6.20	.42	4.94
SCHMIDT'S BEER • ALE	.17	3.92	.19 $\frac{1}{2}$	4.49	.18	4.20	.20	4.70			.40	4.70
YANKEE PREMIUM			.16	3.80	.16	3.80	.19	4.42			.37	4.42

*NON-RETURNABLE BOTTLE

COURTESY OF: RUPPERT BEER • RUPPERT DARK • JACOB RUPPERT ALE • YANKEE PREMIUM

EFFECTIVE 7-1-1940

****Upcoming Events****

September 10, 2017

Service at Brandy Hill

October 8, 2017

A Walk & Tea on Thompson

Common

October 14, 2017

A Tour of Brandy Hill Church

October 28, 2017

United Church of Christ Fun Fest

November 4, 2017

Lithic Talk and Walk

This sheet listing minimum beer/ale pricing for Connecticut, circa 1960, was found as a backing card for a framed image received in a recent donation.



Above: Schoolhouse on School Street in North Grosvenordale taken from the back yard of John Rice's Family Home. Photo donated by John Rice.

Do You Recognize this House?



Above: This brick was found on the property owned by Bill Fisher of East Thompson Road. His home was believed to be an old schoolhouse.....does anyone recognize the building on this brick?

The Thompson Historical Society
P.O. Box 47
Thompson, CT 06277
www.thompsonhistorical.org
Address Correction Requested



THOMPSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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July 1, 2017-June 30, 2018 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. ****

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Visit us on the web at www.thompsonhistorical.org