

Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

We're on the web! Visit us at: www.thompsonhistorical.org

Winter/Spring 2016

THS BOD Meetings
May 2, 2016
7 pm,
Thompson Library,
Community Room 3



Thank You!

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Yikes! Spring has Sprung!

Windham County Transcript: 1926, April 14

Oscar O. Lynch, 45, of North Grosvenordale, died a week after suffering a tarantula bite in a Webster fruit store.



Membership/Dues Information: July 2015-June 2016 Membership

Members can find their paid status on the address sticker of this newsletter. (Membership runs on the THS fiscal year; July 1-June 30.)

Thompson Historical Society
Attn: Membership
P.O. 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.

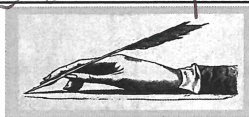
2015 Holiday Season Volunteers

Alice Archambault, Jean Auger, Peg Babbitt, Lucille Barrette, Estelle Bourgeois, Connie Carpenter, Pat Cheever, Karen Cole, Marilyn Dustin, Debbie Faucher, Lisa Faucher, Mattie Golumbjeski, Clarice Guillot, Kathy Hiatt, Claudette Hoffman, Shirley Houghton, Shirley Houle, Valentine Iamartino, Grace Landry, Donna Lange, T.C. Laudner, Gail Leveille, Sue Leveille, Kathy Lewis, Virginia Mainville, Nicole McGarry, Cindy Obert, Brenda Olsen, Henrietta Panu, Linda Pio, Bernadette Quercia, Mercedes Robbins, Carol Romprey, Ann St.Onge, Sue St.Onge, Ramona Savolis, June Shoppe, Linda Smalarz, Ada Temple, JoAnn Thorstenson, Gwyneth Tillen, Sue Vincent, and Aileen Witkowski.

Please forgive any oversights!
All help is welcomed for 2016!

THS Contact info: josephiamartino@gmail.com (please forgive late replies) —860.923.3776

President's Quill ~ Joe Iamartino



Folks, a short and sweet note to thank our many volunteers at the Museum Shoppe at the Old Town Hall and for those performing a variety of digital, website / Facebook / newsletter, museum and archiving activities at the Ellen Larned Museum and at TMHS. We have had record participation this year.

the next generation who show interest in our history, we will send them our newsletter in digital format and try to encourage them to come forward.

Volunteering is a fun way to meet others in our community. I hope to hear from some of you!

Best wishes, Joe Iamartino

We appreciate the efforts of our building team who manage our contractors, write the grants and determine what restoration work is needed.

We appreciate our board who make the time in their busy schedules to create and execute on our strategic direction. While we don't get everything done each season, what is done still amazes me. I am humbled by this magnificent team who do so much with so little, overcoming obstacles with that can-do attitude that defines the best of Thompson's volunteers.

However, I am concerned that our Society isn't attracting a younger generation despite our push for more web content and social media communications. More are checking us out than ever before, but we need to bring those younger folks into our activities and carry forward our mission.

If you, our members, submit names and emails of those from

AmazonSmile Foundation:
Would you please bookmark this link?

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7346324>

All of your eligible shopping at Amazon will benefit the Society! When you shop at AmazonSmile, Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to the Thompson Historical Society, Inc. You can support us every time you shop!



We are seeking volunteers to help with photo cataloging, numbering & identification. If you have the desire to get involved in other areas such as historical research, writing, archive management, giving presentations, preparing walks or historical restoration on our buildings we encourage you to come forward! Please call Joe at 923.3776 or email josephiamartino@gmail.com.

Thank you!

Double Trouble!

~17 July 1939~

Fair Ain't Fair

Providence, RI., July 17 (AP)

The salesman who sold an ice-box to an Eskimo couldn't score a beat on the prize committee at the New York World's Fair.

Yesterday, six cartons of cigarettes were awarded to Harry Fifield of East Thompson, Conn., as the father of the most twins at the Fair's Twin Day. *He doesn't smoke.* His wife, Lydia, received an electric iron. *They have no electricity in the house.*

~14 August 1941~

Single Birth 'Disappoints' Pair With 6 Sets of Twins

East Thompson, Conn., Aug. 14 (AP)

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Fifield said today they were disappointed because their new 5-pound, 13-ounce, son was not twins.

In 17 years, Mrs. Fifield, 39, has had 17 children, including six sets of twins. She and her 61-year-old husband, a \$48-a-monthly WPA worker, wanted a seventh set.

They said, however, that they were delighted with the new arrival, who brought the total of Fifield children still living to 14. The Fifields do not feel they have too many, or even enough, children. Asked if they would have more, Fifield replied, "Why not?"

~ Update on the Mason House ~

Statement of the Thompson Historical Society:

"The town's vote against an ordinance to prevent the demolition of buildings by neglect was clear to all who attended the recent ordinance meeting. The Society, uncomfortable with suggesting such an ordinance, is in a difficult position trying to protect historic districts and properties, while still hoping that the traditional care and attention of properties by owners continues without such rules. Peer pressure may not be working as neighboring towns, including Putnam, have had to enact rules to help town officials keep properties in order.

Maintained properties keep all neighboring property values up. Allowing properties to degrade is not just unattractive to neighbors and possibly unsafe, but could be financial suicide for residents who have much to lose in property value."

Note: In addition to the above statement, please know that the entire town of Thompson is affected by the neglect of the Mason House. While we all enjoy the daily sights and scenes of our little town, we must be cognizant of the fact that we are part of The Last Green Valley, have many visitors to our state park, golf courses, Speedway, and, many of our neighboring school districts travel through our Common on their way to local games at the Thompson Public Schools and our public recreation facilities.



Box of Human Bones

The Hartford Courant (1887-1922) ProQuest Historical Newspapers

Discovery in an Old Tavern Near East Thompson

Putnam, July 26, 1895 - Great excitement was created here today by the finding of a box containing human bones, and the discovery was immediately connected with the East Thompson murder case. About two weeks ago, the old Buck Hill Tavern on the Rhode Island and Connecticut line, notorious as a road house, was burned. Today a crowd of relic hunters was searching in the ruins, and in a dark spot in the cellar one of the number came upon a box which, upon being opened, disclosed human bones. The bones were those of a person small in stature and were the bones of a woman or a boy.

The nearness of the old house to East Thompson, the scene of the Storjewski murder, led to the conclusion that the bones were those of one of the victims, and the report was circulated that Rosa Storjewski's body had been found. The bones had evidently been in the box for a number of years, and the old residents believe that they are the remains of a former occupant of the old tavern.

ANNUAL THS MEETING:

Our Annual Meeting, held in June of each year, will be here before we know it. In order to let everyone know of the date, time and location of the meeting as soon as logistics have been determined, it would be in everyone's best interest if we could announce that information via email. Please send an email to Joe at josephiamartino@gmail.com with the subject line: Attn Membership. Your email will never be shared and will only be used for Society communications.

Additionally, please take note of the expiration date of your membership on the mailing label of this newsletter and bring your dues up to date as soon as possible as we rely on our loyal members' contributions for the upkeep of our historic collections, beautiful grounds, and amazing buildings.

Thank you!

Exploring the Last Green Valley: Harriet Tourtellotte Had Profound Impact on Thompson

By Bill Reid for *The Bulletin*. March 12, 2016

In celebration of Women's History Month, today we explore the life of Harriet Tourtellotte, who turned a deep personal loss into an opportunity to make a difference for generations of young learners in her hometown of Thompson.

Born on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 23, 1837, Harriet was raised in Thompson, where her father was part owner of one of the larger textile mills.

She grew up in a prosperous home and attended her local village school. There was no high school in Thompson so her parents sent her to Nichols Preparatory School in Dudley, Mass., to continue her education.

At Nichols Preparatory School, she met another student from Thompson, Jacob Francis Tourtellotte. Even though they came from the same town, Harriet and Jacob, or Frank as he was called, did not know each other until they met at Nichols.

They soon became sweethearts and so began a wonderful relationship that would sustain them through years of great success, heart-wrenching sorrow and philanthropic opportunity.

After Nichols Preparatory School, Harriet attended Salem Vale Normal School for music in Salem to become a music teacher. Frank discovered that medicine was his calling, and he went to Columbia College's School of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City.

Soon after graduating from college, Frank joined the Union cause in the Civil War and accepted a commission in the U.S. Navy as a ship's surgeon.

Following the war, Frank and Harriet were married in New York in 1865. Some years later they followed Frank's brothers John and Munroe to the western frontier, settling in Winona, Minn., and set about establishing a new life.

Frank practiced medicine and began investing their money while Harriet concentrated on making a home for Frank and their baby girl Lucy. Sadly, at barely year old, Lucy contracted scarlet fever and died. In November 1873, three years after the passing of Lucy,

Harriet became pregnant again at the age of 36

In July of 1874, Frances Harriet "Hattie" Tourtellotte was born. By this time, Franks' investments were doing well and Harriet had also become a good investor in land and real estate. They settled into a happy home life with their new daughter, and through their investments, became some of the wealthiest people west of the Mississippi River.

Tragedy struck again in 1884 when Hattie, age 9, died from what was suspected to be either food poisoning or appendicitis. Frank and Harriet were devastated and tried to move past the sorrow of losing both their children.

A year after Hattie's death, Harriet met Sarah Knight, a woman who had dedicated her life to helping the sick and injured. She had founded Deaconess Home in Minneapolis and had a deeply meaningful life caring for others.

The happiness and joy that Sarah expressed in her work assisting others was a huge influence on Harriet. Over the years their friendship grew.

One day in 1906, Harriet told Sarah about her childhood home of Thompson. She told her that Thompson was really two communities, Thompson Hill with grand homes of the wealthy, and the other part of town for those who worked in the mills.

Thompson still didn't have a high school and suddenly it occurred to Harriet what she would do.

She told Sarah that the law compelled children to attend school, but in Thompson, the only way students could go to high school was to take a trolley into the next town.

Harriet decided to follow Sarah's inspiration and leadership, and along with her husband Frank, would build a high school for all of Thompson's children. She would see to it that they would have every facility that children from wealthier families had.

She would build a great school with a grand auditorium for the arts. It would have a state-of-the-art gymnasium and a magnificent memorial room filled with family art and treasures.

(cont. next page)

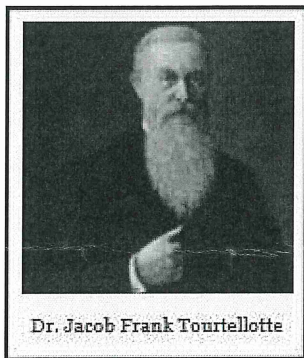
~ Harriet Tourtellotte cont. ~

Importantly, the school would be built in memory of Lucy and Hattie. For the first time in many years, Harriet felt alive with a new calling and direction for her life.

In 1907, Harriet visited Thompson and, with the help of interested citizens and family members, began planning for Tourtellotte Memorial High School. It would not be built on Thompson Hill, but instead on a small hill with commanding view of North Grosvenordale, near the homes of many children whose parents worked in the mills.

On Dec. 21, 1907, the first stone was laid for the school and from that point on, Harriet was actively involved in all aspects of the school.

Two years later, on Sept. 3, 1909, the school was dedicated. There was an empty seat that day as Dr. Tourtellotte was unable to attend due to sickness. He passed away in 1912.



Dr. Jacob Frank Tourtellotte

Alone, Harriet was determined to continue working for her school. She concluded her business in Minnesota and built a small home on Main Street in North Grosvenordale so that she could be close to the school. She remained involved with the school until her death in 1919.

It is hard to imagine Thompson without Tourtellotte Memorial High School. It is a grand building that has served as the town's high school for many years.

As the town grew, so did the building, and today a modern middle school and elementary school are part of the complex.

Not only did Harriet build the school, she also endowed it with a fund to help pay for maintenance. That fund is now being used by the Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association to restore the original building as well as the amazing artwork and treasures located there in the museum.

Last month, members and friends of the Last Green

Valley attended a program at Tourtellotte Memorial High School and learned about Harriet, Frank, and the work the Alumni Association is doing to restore the building.

The building restoration is a fascinating and heartwarming story about several Thompson residents who have come together to fulfill and restore the vision that Harriet Tourtellotte brought to life more than 100 years ago.

Time and again, I learn about people from our region who have made a difference in the lives of others. My guess is that most people have never heard about Harriet Tourtellotte. Perhaps they knew that Thompson's high school was called Tourtellotte but didn't know why.

The residents of Thompson, especially those who graced the halls of the school, know who Harriet was and are forever grateful. This generous, philanthropic woman returned to Thompson, and out of deep personal tragedy, found meaning by making a difference in the lives of others.

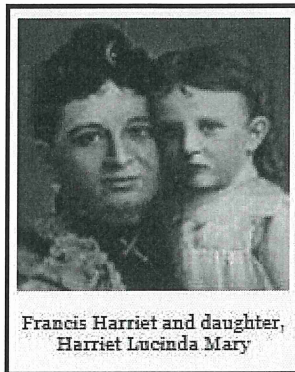
Her legacy lives on every day with the ringing of the school bell at Tourtellotte Memorial High School.

Here in The Last Green Valley, let's always remember to care for, enjoy, and pass on the stories of those who helped make our region a better place.

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Bill Reid is chief ranger of The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor and has lived in the region for more than 30 years. He can be reached at bill@tlgv.org.

Information for this column was taken directly from a paper written by Joseph Lindley, TMHS class of '74, and TMHS Alumni Association President, with input from Joseph Iamartino, alumni member and President of the Thompson Historical Society.



Francis Harriet and daughter, Harriet Lucinda Mary

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



Q&A

Q: Where was this store?

In the *Independent Observer Newspaper*, published by Henry Webb 2d, Brooklyn, CT, dated 24 Dec. 1821: New Store at Thompson and New Goods, Scott & Almy. They have dry goods (all kinds of material) shoes, tobacco, hardware, crockery and glassware.

that this was Mrs. William Kimball, but this needs to be proven. Anyone?

Q: When did the mills and businesses start getting electricity?

A: In the first decade of the 1900s. An October 1904 *Scientific American* article explains the transition. We also know, for example, that Mr. Ream (Marianapolis School) supplied electricity to neighbors in the early 1900s. However, outlying districts didn't get electricity for many years. There is a great story that one enterprising wife in East Thompson, tired of waiting, decided to create her own electricity. She installed a small turbine and generator on her mill pond after taking basic electricity classes by mail. She installed the wire herself and soon had lights and general electricity in her home before her neighbors. Legend has it

Q: Does anyone recognize this picture? The picture is labeled: *Store at Wilsonville From Station*, and is dated 12/24/- but we can't read the year!

