



# The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

www.thompsonhistorical.org

Winter 2005

## Calendar of Events

**June 5 2006: Annual Meeting & Society Picnic**

**Greystone Farm, Rt. 21**

**The Home of Rob & Sue Vincent**

**6 PM—Picnic**

**7 PM—Annual Meeting**

The Vincents have offered once again to host the picnic at their home. Rain or shine. Bring a favorite dish or dessert. Questions: Call Sue Vincent at 860 923 5728.

## President's Quill

Some of you may have wondered why the Society, from an external perspective, has been somewhat quiet for the past few months. We've been working diligently on many projects behind the scenes....

## A new exhibit at the Thompson Historical Society Museum

This summer, the museum will have two new features: a permanent exhibit on the Ten Villages of Thompson and a rotating exhibit area. In the rotating exhibit area, we will have fancy period dresses and artifacts from 5 generations of the same Thompson family. The museum will open this summer (Summer 2006), replacing the popular Dr. Paine exhibit.

## Echoes of Old Thompson Book: Vol. II

The upcoming book is at Donning Publishers (Virginia Beach, VA) being readied for printing in early Fall 2006. Similar in format to the last book, we will be offering it in a leather-bound and box format and a soft cover style. The new volume

will feature the following:

- A) The complete Thompson and Putnam sections of the History of Windham County by Richard M. Bayles, written in 1889.
- B) New information on Major Robert Thompson
- C) The 1836 text of John Barber's Thompson overview (the hard-to-find expanded 2<sup>nd</sup> text version)
- D) Interesting interviews from many Thompson residents: Donald Hoenig, Minnie Reynolds, David Rawson, Clarence Ballard, Adrienne Coderre, Walter Eddy, Jr., Henry Bernard, Jane Johnson, Frances C. Gesualdi, West Thompson Memories by Mary Rivers Hall & Friends, 'Reminiscing', a Poem by Esther Alida Sandstrom Swanson, a reprinting of 'The Bee Hunt' by Ronald Tillen, and 'Old Thompson Memories & Stories' written over 100 years ago by an Unknown Author with an excellent eye for a story
- E) The wonderful 'Growing Up' stories of Francis Fitzgibbons from Quinebaug
- F) The Eva Kelly letters (letters written to Eva Kelly from her friends, revealing fascinating scenes of daily life in Thompson in the 1890s)
- G) Hundreds and hundreds of photographs including a 16 page full color section
- H) The books will be physically the same size as Volume I (8.5" X 11") and will be at least 272 pages, probably longer.

I mention also that we had more than 30 interviews, dozens of stories and several hundred superb photographs that didn't make this second volume. I apologize to everyone who submitted material that was not used. The desire to include material from all of the villages, to make use the limited transcribers we had and to keep the book cost down were all driving factors. While every effort was made to include the best material in the book, the truth is that so much of what came in was of excellent quality that we ended up with a first come/first served design mentality. The upside is that there is plenty of excellent material for a Volume III which I hope to see in the years to come.

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## Officers / Contact Info:

President: Joe Iamartino  
 Vice President: Sue Vincent  
 Treasurer: Barbara Weaver  
 Secretary: John Lengel  
 Curator: Mark Savolis  
 Collections: Judy Rondeau  
 Photos: Alice Biesiadecki  
 Museum Shop: Lucille Barrette, Helen Flood, Carol Holewa, Val Iamartino, Henrietta Panu, Jane Provost, June Schoppe, Sue Vincent, Sandra Warner  
 Website: Blair Cole  
 Grant Coordinator: Lynne Lengel  
 Administrator: Blair Cole  
**www.thompsonhistorical.org**  
**or call us at 860-923-3200**

(continued next page) **Echoes of Old****Thompson: The Coloring Book**

Susan Vincent, our hardworking Vice President, has been leading the charge on the greatly anticipated coloring book project. Suggested by board member Jane Johnson based on her experience as a teacher in the Thompson and Putnam School Systems, the coloring book has dozens of historical Thompson landmarks and scenes, each sketched in coloring-book-style by noted Thompson area artists: Donna Lange, David Wagner, June Schoppe, Wendy Barske, Laura Reynolds, Alecia Underhill and Peter Vercelli. This high quality coloring book will be an accompanying piece to the Bus Tour of Thompson that the Thompson Historical Society offers the 2<sup>nd</sup> Graders at Mary R. Fisher Elementary School. Our hope is to further interest in and respect for Thompson by the youngsters.

**Tour of Thompson for Mary R. Fisher 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Classes**

Organized by Jane Johnson and school administrators, Thompson public school 2<sup>nd</sup> graders visit:

Three Rows and Riverside Park, 1872 Grosvenor-Dale Company Mill (No. Gros.), West Thompson Dam & Lake, Thompson Common, The Old Town Hall, Fort Hill, Chase Road, Greystone Farm (on Rt. 21).

Tour guides Ruth Barks, Ron Tillen, Jane Johnson, Sue Vincent, Jane Provost and others will explain town history to the youngsters on the tour - May 30 & 31. Donna Grant and Lynne Landy will spin and weave sheep's wool the old fashioned way - 'from sheep to shawl'. We expect a good time for all.

**Archives Collection Process**

This year, thirty percent of the Society's collection was entered into "Past Perfect", our museum software package. Used by museums across America, this software package provides museum administrators with a valuable tool to manage ever-increasing collections. While our hard working cataloging team of Jean Cole, Ruth Barks, Lucille Barrette and Society Administrator Blair Cole hoped for significant progress, the true scope of the project revealed itself only when they were immersed in it knee-deep. They reported back to the Board of Directors that progress would continue but the mountain was steep and progress would be slower than originally projected. As many of the larger projects previously described will be completed this summer of 2006, our personnel resources will be shifted over to our archive project for the balance of 2006 and into 2007 to complete this massive undertaking, addressing the artifacts, clothing, paper goods, photographs and paintings in our collections. From an external perspective, we will have another year of minimal programs while we complete this task but look to re-

**School District Number 9**

Town clerk Jeff Barske brought some old school district books to my attention. Entries from one very old small book : the Records of School District 9 (with original spelling) appealed to me .....

It starts with this note: *This book was given to the District by Japhett Cortiss and Lyman Upham in November 1826*

*Notice. This is (to) warn all the inhabitants of the district No. 9 to meet at their schoolhouse on Thursday the 30 day of November instant at 6 o'clock PM to see if they can agree to bye a stove for said schoolhouse by a tax on said district and any other business that is proper to be done in said meeting. Thompson Nov 27, 1826. Alpheus Alber Committee(man)*

From the minutes, Nov. 30 1826 meeting:

- *Voted that each person shall bring one foot and half of wood of tallied measure to a schollar*
- *Voted that the wood shall be delivered at the schoolhouse within 12 days of the beginning of the school; if not, the neglicts schoollars sall not be taught in schooll.*
- *Voted that Lyman Upham shall be Inspector of the Wood.*

Announcement of meeting 8 Dec 1826

- *Voted to have Japhett Corttis git the stove and have two dollars for gitting*
- *Voted Asa Upham be collector of the tax for the stove*

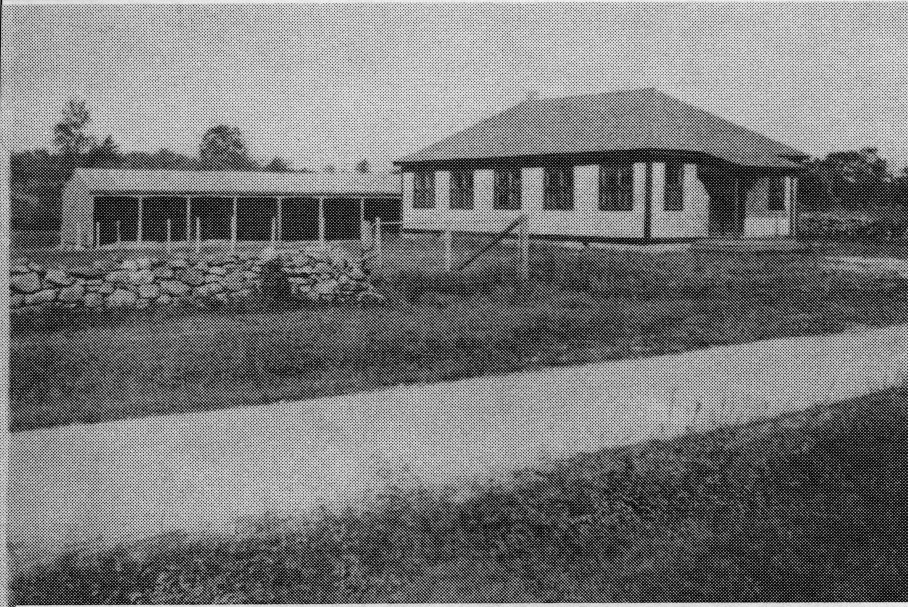
Announcement of meeting March 8 1827

- *...to raise money to repair said schoolhouse*
- *To chose an agent to prosecute those persons that took away the stove from the schoolhouse*



This photograph, provided by Paul Hughes from Webster, MA, shows Eva Kelly teaching her first class when she was just 18 years old. It is believed that the photograph shows the interior of the East Thompson Schoolhouse. Born in the early 1870s in Wilsonville, Eva was the daughter of Mr. Kelly, the Wilsonville town postmaster. She attended grammar school in Wilsonville but went to high school in Webster because Thompson had no high school at that time.

Eva Kelly Huntington kept many of the letters she received from her friends throughout the years but they disappeared after her death. Recently, many of these letters appeared on the collectible letters market and some were sold on Ebay to collectors all over the world. We were privileged to receive a generous donation of these unique letters from Ms. Gretchen Boeing of Seattle, WA. A group of these letters have become a featured chapter in the upcoming book "Echoes of Old Thompson, Volume II". The chapter is a fascinating glimpse into the life of a country girl who became a schoolteacher, told through the words of her friends. We'd love to know more about Eva Kelly and we ask anyone with information on her to drop us a note or give us a call.

**PLEASE NOTE:****Membership dues are:**

\$10.00 Individual Membership

\$15.00 Family Membership

\$25.00 Contributing Membership

\$5.00 Student/Gift Membership

**Dues to be paid by July 1, 2006**

**for July 1, 2006—June 30, 2007 year**

A member can sign up a new member for \$5.00 for the first year.

East Thompson—Kings Daughters Hall. The photograph below, from October 1951, shows "The Ladies" of Kings Daughters preparing for a Halloween Party. For many years, it was tradition to visit the Kings Daughters Hall for a fabulous dinner following the Memorial Day tribute visits to the town's cemeteries. The hall is today a private home on East Thompson Road. Help identifying these ladies will be gratefully accepted.





In the last newsletter, we discussed the oldest standing Thompson house which was built about 1715. This house was moved to Massachusetts and is still standing today.. Ken Goloski volunteered these rare images showing the old Nichols house in its original location on Rt. 193, just north of the West Thompson Burying Ground.



The railroad bed on the left hand side of this photograph is the one next to the West Thompson Burying Ground. This view shows the corn stacks in the field

At a recent meeting of the board of directors of the Society, it was suggested that some Society members would prefer to receive their newsletter by email in Adobe PDF format. If enough readers would like to receive the newsletter through email, we would be glad to set this up as an option.

Adobe PDF is a common program for newsletters and web-based communications. Adobe PDF has reader software that can be downloaded for free ([www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)).. If you are interested in receiving the newsletter by email, please send an email to [jiamartino@charter.net](mailto:jiamartino@charter.net)



Mills Family members on their property which was next to the modern Thornfield Hall.on Thompson Hill.. The ladies below are unknown but those hats sure are interesting. If you can help us identify any of them, we would greatly appreciate the help.





These wonderful photographs were taken at the Meadowbrook Farm in Wilsonville, known also as the Woodward home ( 310 Wilsonville Road). The date is probably sometime in the late 1890s to the early 1900s. We need help identifying these folks.





## Book Order Form for Echoes of Old Thompson, Volume II

The Thompson Historical Society is proud to announce that our new book 'Echoes of Old Thompson, Volume II' is available for ordering. This will be a limited press run of 1000 copies.

Similar in format to the last book, we will be selling two versions:

Option 1: A leather—covered book with box case Price: \$68.00 (Society Member Price)

Option 2: A soft-cover book with full color cover Price: \$48.00 (Society Member Price)

The new volume will feature the following:

- A) The complete Thompson and Putnam sections of the History of Windham County by Richard M. Bayles, written in 1889.
- B) New information on Major Robert Thompson
- C) The 1836 text of John Barber's Thompson overview (the hard-to-find expanded 2<sup>nd</sup> text version)
- D) Interesting interviews from many Thompson residents: Donald Hoenig, Minnie Reynolds, David Rawson, Clarence Ballard, Adrienne Coderre, Walter Eddy, Jr., Henry Bernard, Jane Johnson, Frances C. Gesualdi, West Thompson Memories by Mary Rivers Hall & Friends, 'Reminiscing', a Poem by Esther Alida Sandstrom Swanson, a reprinting of 'The Bee Hunt' by Ronald Tillen, and 'Old Thompson Memories & Stories' written over 100 years ago by an Unknown Author \
- E) The wonderful 'Growing Up' stories of Francis Fitzgibbons from Quinebaug
- F) The Eva Kelly letters (letters written to Eva Kelly from her friends, revealing fascinating scenes of daily life in the 1890s)
- G) Several hundred photographs including a 16 page full color section
- H) The books will be physically the same size as Volume I (8.5" X 11") and will be at least 272 pages, probably longer.

This book is slightly more expensive than the first Echoes of Old Thompson book due to the color pages. The prices shown above are for members only.

The demand for leather covered books for the first book far exceeded our projections. This time, we are taking advance orders to ensure that every request from a Society member will be fulfilled as requested. The books will be delivered in the Fall of 2006. When the books arrive, we will contact you for pickup or ship by mail, based on your instructions. All proceeds from the sale of the book support Society operations and the upkeep of our two buildings. Thank you for your past, present and future support.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

# of Leather covered books: \_\_\_\_\_ X \$68.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

# of Soft cover books: \_\_\_\_\_ X \$48.00 = \_\_\_\_\_

For pickup, add \$0. For shipping by media mail, add \$4.50 X # of books \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: Thompson Historical Society  
P.O. Box 47, Thompson, CT 06277  
attn: Echoes Volume 2 Book

Total Enclosed: \$ (USD) \_\_\_\_\_  
(check or money order, no cash please)