



# The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter



Fall 2022

PO Box 47, Thompson CT 06277

[www.thompsonhistorical.com](http://www.thompsonhistorical.com)

## Revolutionary War Button



Early in the American Revolutionary War the British concentrated their efforts in the northern states trying to quell the rebellion. This northern plan was unsuccessful as Washington's army gained morale and the French took notice. The British decided to switch tactics and attack in the south where they thought they had the support of southern loyalists. They landed at Savannah, Georgia and began southern operations from that city. Some months later the French joined Washington's army to try to recapture the ports there. Thus began the "Siege of Savannah." One of the fighting there was the 95th or "Walsh's" regiment. It was actually an Irish unit that fought with the French during the war. The regiment had previously fought in the West Indies and a detachment even sailed with John Paul Jones of "I have not yet begun to fight" fame. The pictured button hung on the uniform of a member of

"Walsh's" 95th Irish regiment and was found in Windham County. It's anyone's guess as to why this Irish soldier, who was fighting with the French, in Georgia, lost a button in Connecticut. I've been told it wasn't uncommon for soldiers from different units or countries to exchange buttons following a shared battle. Maybe there is an American Continental Army button in Ireland today!

### Inside This Issue:

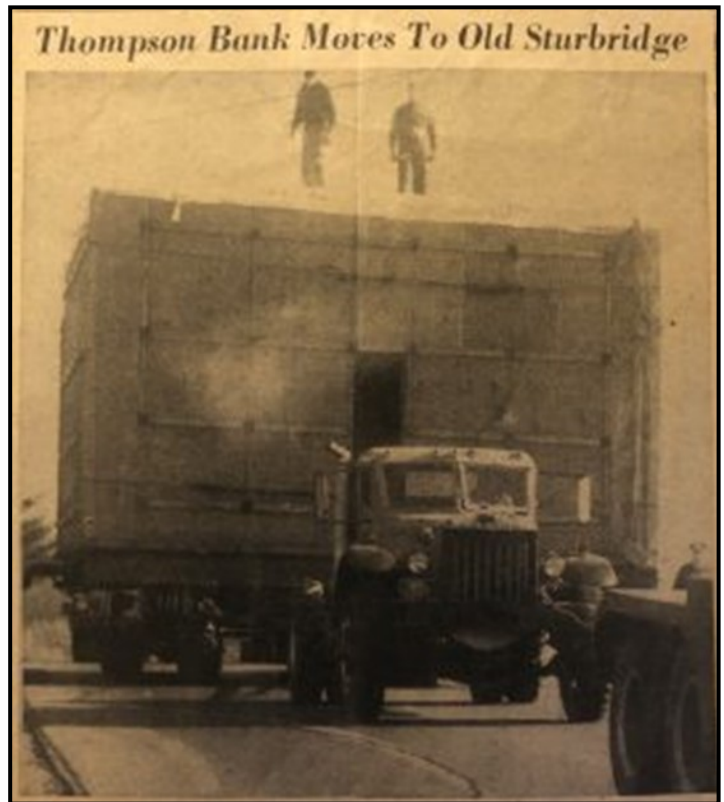
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### Who was Captain Spicer of East Thompson?

Captain Spicer, of East Thompson, was born Frederick Spicer to Albert and Henrietta Spicer of Eastford, CT in 1870. He had several siblings to include Carrie (Spicer) Robbins, wife of Herbert Robbins of East Thompson. On March 22, 1898, he married Cynthia E. Weld of Sturbridge, MA and lived in numerous places throughout his life to include Eastford, East Thompson, Webster, MA and the New London/Norwich area where it is believed he obtained his title of captain. Captain Spicer's Father lived in the Webster Gore, was a member of the Chaubunagungamaug Yacht Club of Webster Lake and together they ran a Steamboat on the lake in the mid to late 1890's. Captain Spicer spent his final years on Spicer Road in East Thompson, passing in 1949. He is buried in the E. Thompson Cemetery."

## The Thompson Bank at Old Sturbridge Village

By the time Old Sturbridge Village started looking for a mid-19th century New England bank, many of the historic structures were gone or significantly altered. The Connecticut General Assembly incorporated the Thompson Bank on June 5, 1833. Over the next 60 years, the bank experienced its share of ups and downs before the business moved to [Putnam](#) and sold the building to the town of Thompson. The town used it for various functions before selling it to the Boy Scouts of America. In the fall of 1963, after OSV bought the building, movers jacked up and carefully boxed the 22' x 28' structure. Workers threaded steel rods through the plaster and used plywood to brace and provide extra structural support. Taking care to travel at only a few miles an hour and avoid congested areas, narrow roads, and low overhangs, the trip took four days in mid-November. While Thompson is not far from Sturbridge—17 miles—the carefully planned route added over 20 miles to the trip. The Thompson Bank still lives on in the imagination of the town. Despite the neighboring church's expansion, there is still a half-empty lot where the bank once stood across the street from the common. Thompson's historical sign—erected by the Thompson Historical Society, the town of Thompson, and the Connecticut Historical Commission—includes mention of the move of the Thompson Bank. Finally, a few miles away, Thompson's Makers Fair has a booth that is loosely based on the bank's structure—an homage to the town's lost history.



For the rest of the article, go to:

<https://connecticuthistory.org/the-connecticut-houses-that-ended-up-in-massachusetts/>

Emma Wiley, digital humanities assistant at CT Humanities, recently worked with Joe Iamartino and Mark Snay to research an article about Connecticut buildings that were moved to Old Sturbridge Village. Titling the picture essay, "The Connecticut Houses that Ended up in Massachusetts," she described how A. B. and J. Cheney Wells searched for historic buildings to house their collections of antiques between 1938 and 1964. She describes how five structures were moved from - Goshen, Stafford Springs, Willimantic, Woodstock and Thompson - to contribute to the museum village. "Despite originating in towns dozens of miles apart, these Connecticut businesses, office, and house share an imaginary town. While these historic structures no longer live in Connecticut, evidence of their existence lives on in historic maps, photographs, and locals' memories." What are your memories or photographs of the bank on the move?

**Capt. Albert Spicer and son, Fred, have leased the steamer Stiletto for the season, and will be good in running order by Saturday, having been thoroughly repaired the past week. She will run to all points available, and can be hired for either picnic or private parties. The steamer will make Union Point its headquarters, and as the trains on the Southbridge branch stop there it makes it very convenient for visitors to the lake. Capt. Spicer and son are old sailors, and, besides knowing how to handle a boat, know every inch of the lake, which will be a guarantee of safety.**

Webster Times

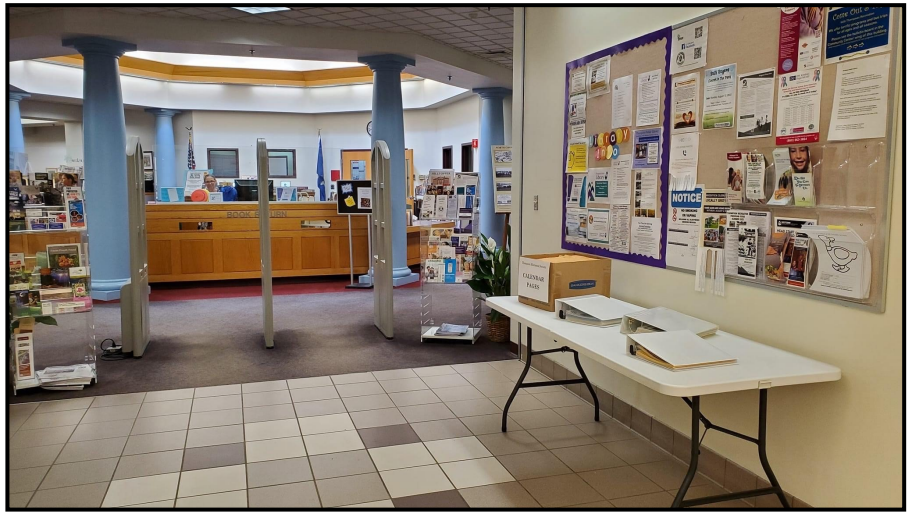
June 28, 1895

**Capt. Fred Spicer, who lives on the Thompson road, ordered a gasoline launch from a Mystic, Ct., firm. The boat is to be one of the fastest on on the lake and will have a seating capacity of 25. Capt. Spicer is a former sea navigator and holds an engineer's and pilot's license. He arrived at the lake April 20 and since then has created havoc among vegetable producers in his neighborhood. When he commenced growing green goods he had five competitors, but he has outlived them all. Capt. Spicer will be at the lake for the next season. For the previous five years he was a resident of Gale's Ferry, Ct. For 15 years he was pilot on the Thames river.**

Webster Times

June 28, 1895

## THS Calendars are Available for Free at the Library.



Thank you to Alison for permission and to Roberta Baublitz who works at the Thompson Library, and is a THS director (l.) She is doing a great job of showing a calendar page offered for free to visitors to the library with Joe Iamartino (r.). Thank you also to Pat Bathgate, Sharon Napierata, Lucille Langlois and Kathy Welch for their helping to make this possible. There are 200 early historic photos to choose from.

## Pictures From the Past

*AILEEN WITKOWSKI 6/1/22*

**Off Main Street**

**WEBSTER TIMES, THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 1965 15**

### New Swimming Pond Opened Guards Named

THOMPSON — Hundreds of local children and adults have been enjoying the swimming and bathing facilities now available to them at the new town swimming pool off of Main street, N. Grosvenordale.

The pool was officially opened Memorial Day and during the recent heat wave children swarmed all over the sandy beach after being dismissed from school.

First Selectman George F. Bates Sr. has announced that the Board of Selectmen has appointed two lifeguards to serve at the pool. They are, John Bibek, of Buckley Hill road, and Armand Lafleur of Reardon road. A lifeguard stand has been installed and one more will be added shortly.

Receptacles have been placed in the beach area and all bathers are urged to use them and not litter the grounds.

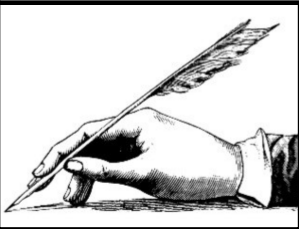
Motorists are also asked not to drive or park cars along the beach as this constitutes a hazard to children running and playing in the sand.

Currently, the pool is open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. More rules and regulations governing the pool are being drawn up and will be made public as soon as they are completed.

### SWIMMING AREA IN NORTH GROSVENORDALE

**NORTH GROSVENORDALE** — Pictured above is the new town swimming pool which was opened recently.

## From The President's Quill - By: Joseph Iamartino



Friends,

Over the many years, we have been researching many historical topics, and, occasionally, we receive controversial ones. We have not printed or repeated many of these. Having consulted the tribal elders on these matters in years past, their conclusions were simple. Some things are better off not being repeated. What if the story is wrong? Better to bury it than get it wrong.

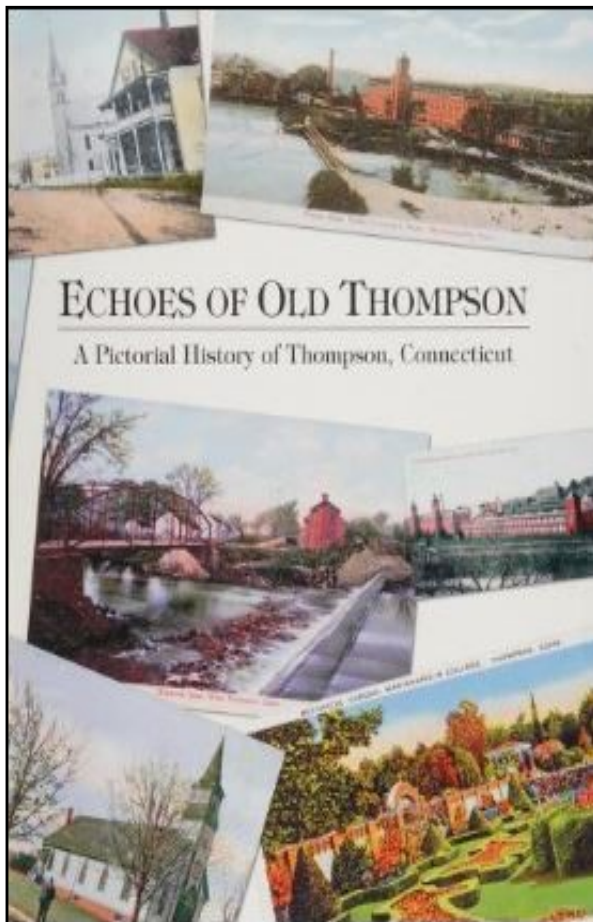
Well, like it or not, I am now a card-carrying AARP member. I think there are lessons from the past that **SHOULD HAVE** been told. Burying a story is doing a disservice to all of us seeking to understand how others lived in the past, and it is important to **NOT** judge by the differing standards of then vs now.

I violently disagree with the recent trend of revisionist history. Destroying a statue that represented the thinking of 130 years ago is as bad perhaps as that real or perceived sin that was being celebrated with the original statue. How about explaining the alleged or real sin instead of erasing it from memory?

I take full responsibility alone for stepping forward from now on with a few uncomfortable or controversial stories. These are not told to sensationalize untold historical secrets. Instead, they reveal now what stayed in the shadows then. There are many who feel our society is going backwards. For myself, I like the more honest ways this generation has addressed topics that were unspeakable in the past except in the shadows. We have many cringe-worthy things today. Confronting controversial topics openly is a hallmark of a free society, with both the good and bad that comes with such freedom. Taking these debates too far defeats the very purpose of the freedom our nation is so blessed to have. Healthy debate could be the best national goal.

We have had several people come forward to THS in this period of the 'Roe versus Wade' abortion rights topic with the Supreme Court. These people revealed the history of not one but two illegal abortion clinics operating during the Great Depression and during WWII in our area, one run by George Lockwood in East Thompson. Can we cast aside the modern opinions and treat this now confirmed historical information as a condition of those times? How known was this practice?

I would appreciate feedback on this still controversial topic, with a request to you for more historic perspective on these findings.



## Echos of Old Thompson Vol 1

**Orders are still being accepted re-prints of Echos of  
Old Thompson Volume I**

Volume 1— \$45.00 (Only 500 Available)

Volume 1 & 2—special price \$60.00  
(limited to 200 sets. Many already sold)

Shipping for 1 book is \$7.50

Shipping for 2 books is \$8.25

Also for Sale:

DVD of the Nine Lives of Engine No. 9 - \$15.00

To Place Your Order, Contact Ginny Flood.

Call or Text (860) 933-5239

OR

Email [gffloodster@gmail.com](mailto:gffloodster@gmail.com)

# Buildings at St. Stephen's Church

By Lucille Langlois

Here are some of the uses of the Building at St Stephen's Parish, Quinebaug CT.

The church, according to both the 100th and 125th anniversary booklets was founded and built in 1884, a mission of St Joseph North Grosvenordale. Mr Eben Stevens, owner of Intervale Mill, Dudley-Quinebaug where a large number of Irish and French/Canadian workers lived in the immediate area, were traveling either to Webster MA or North Grosvenordale CT to attend Sunday Masses. Mr Stevens donated a parcel of land in Quinebaug, at the Junction of Rte 197 and 131, and gave \$300.00 to help with constructing the church. He kept "tithing" money records of those workers who chose the old tithing system to help defray the cost of the building. Stained glass windows were added in the early 1900's to replace the original windows. In the mid 1930's the church was renovated where the back wall of the sanctuary was opened to add a new sanctuary allowing increased seating. Along with numerous statutes to various saints.

The State of Connecticut celebrated its 300th Anniversary, in 1935. St Stephen's was not to be outdone, according to an article in the Worcester Sunday Telegram dated 20th October 1935, The church and surrounding areas were decked with bunting and flags, a parade of such "magnitude", speeches, and the unveiling of a memorial to Mr. Eben S. Stevens, "Father of our Village". Until late 1970's, the older folks continued to call the River St/ Railroad Ave area of Dudley "Quinebaug village".

During this time I was told by an elder of the parish that Quinebaug men who were idle, due to the depression, assisted in "digging out" the sub level of the church to create a space for parishioners to gather. This sub level was used up to the 1970's for church socials, card (whist & pitch) parties, bake sales, church suppers, breakfasts, and Religious Ed programs (religious instructions and plays. There was a small kitchen and restroom. Electricity came to Quinebaug around the time of FDR rural electric program. I was also told by elders that when the priest came to Quinebaug for Sunday Masses he was hosted by the "elders of that time". This meant that they held the sacred vessels and church garments in their homes, served and if necessary housed the priest overnight. A rectory came into being only in the late 1950's as there was not running water or electricity until 1930's. In the 1940's, a new "electric" organ was purchased. This was possibly the time that the choir loft was added. I was also

told that the organ was hoisted over the rail and into the loft by hoist (block & tackle).

In 1955, St Stephen's became a parish with a resident priest, who rented out the second floor of a home owned by Ms. Rose Willett directly across the road from the church, until a rectory was built in 1956/1957. The Rectory was quite large and had a dining room that sat 12. There were three bedrooms, one with a sitting room, usually used by a resident housekeeper, three baths, an oversize living room 20'X40', a kitchen with all amenities, double oven, washer/dryer and a two-room inner and outer office for the priest and secretary to conduct "business". In the 1970's, a back deck became an enclosed porch. The sub level had 4 classrooms, an office, a small utility room for office /school material/supplies, two stall garage, boiler room and restroom. The plan was that a catholic school would utilize the classes and the sisters would take over the upper level) and a new rectory would be built, that never materialized. Parking areas were added when parishioners and friends of the community donated land across the Rectory for that purpose. A new altar and wooden rideau (French word for curtain) were installed.

1960's saw a parish library in the lower church hall. A major yearly event was started and held each August to raise funds. The Lawn Party utilized the Junction of Routes 131 and 197 lawn for full exposure to road traffic, with children rides, games of chance, raffles, bake sales, food court, live music for dancing and "beer garden" for all parishioners and general public to enjoy. This was a great fund raiser for at least 10 years.

In 1970's, there were other renovations: the altar and wooden rideau behind the altar was removed and changed for a velour drape that was installed. Three colors, liturgical red, green, and purple to be changed with the liturgical seasons. A parishioner built an altar with matching candle stands, and lectern and tabernacle stand. A new Reconciliation room was added on the North side of the church. A handicapped ramp was installed at the same time. A bell carillon system was installed, to announce Masses, provided hourly chime and played taped music. During the cold weather months, daily Mass was held in the large class room under the rectory, to conserve fuel.

A Parish Center 50' by 100' was built at the end of the parking lot, with restrooms and a kitchen, that has been used over the years for numerous, parish events, breakfasts, suppers, dinner dances, flea markets/yard sales, chicken barbecues, and class rooms for Religious Education,

(Cont'd on Page 6)

(Cont'd from Page 5)

along with pageants put on by students and teachers, and could/can also be use by parishioners after funerals and/or rented out for family occasions. It was also use for a short time as a town polling place in Quinebaug.

Late 1970's, Annhurst College in Woodstock CT closed and St Stephen purchased their chapel Stations of the Cross, to replace our oversized Stations. During the early 1990's the church was renovation again. Much of the stenciling around the church and Celtic figures of the Four Evangelist were added.

2000's saw the Rectory dining room used for a coffee hour after the Sunday morning Mass. Bible classes were held during Lent in the large classroom in the sub level of the Rectory. After the death of Rev William O'Rourke in 2005, who served St Stephen's for 18 years there were a number of short term priests who served, as the talk was that we were on the "to be closed list". When the decision was made in the mid-2000's a team petitioned the Bishop's office and requested a three year moratorium and here we are in 2022 "and still in business". Though we are now yoked with St Joseph, North Grosvenordale, and then further yoked with St Mary, Putnam, and Holy Trinity in Pomfret. A couple years ago, a new ramp was installed, as the older one was in need of repair, and the Reconciliation Room was taken down, as it had deteriorated due to unknown water damage. Stay tuned..... Lucille Langlois

## Webster Joyride

Digitized historic local papers, such as the Webster Times and soon, the Putnam Patriot, give us great insight into years past. In today's news, there seems to be little that can surprise us with the happenings in our present day society - especially vehicle theft. Readers of the Webster Times, or at least those that were not in the immediate area of the Webster, MA station of the NYNH&H railroad, got a surprise when they read page 3 of the January 4th 1912 edition of the newspaper. A recent post on the Webster and Dudley Massachusetts Past, Present and Future Facebook page tells of the tale. It seems that Ralph Jardine, alias James Flannagan, decided to take engine 1549 with two freight cars for a "joy ride" from the Worcester, MA freight yards. Speeding as fast as 75 MPH, the engine collided with the Norwich Boat Train in Webster. Jardine, intoxicated, was pulled from the pile of coal that half buried him and his lacerations were quickly taken care of. While 20+ passengers of the Boat Train were slightly injured, it was fortunate there were no serious injuries or deaths. More about this incident can be read on the above mentioned Facebook page, or a search of The Webster Times digitized for both Jan. 4, 1912 and a 25 year retelling in the January 4, 1937 edition.

## August 2022 Patriot Digitization

A recent article on WINY news informs us that Putnam Public Library director Patricia Colwell has reported that in part, through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Putnam Patriot newspaper from 1908 to 1949, and the Windham County Observer from 1905 to 1949 will be digitized. It will be included as part of the Connecticut Digital Newspaper Project and located in the system of the Library of Congress' Chronicling America program. The expectations are for the newspapers to be available for searching in 2023. As with the digitization of the Webster Times, this will make searching these newspapers very efficient and open up a great resource for local history. We will let everyone know when these papers go-live online.



Left: This photo was found in a genealogical collection donated a few years ago by Elizabeth Huber Port. This collection consists of early photos, military commissions from the American Revolutionary War/War of 1812/Civil war, family documents and genealogical research. Numerous families are named in this collection, to include Jacobs, Crosby, Means and others. This photo, a 5"x7" tin type, was not identified. We do not know if this house is in Thompson and ask that if anyone recognizes it, to please let us know.

## Archivist Corner By: Mark Snay

The April 2022 THS newsletter has an article about North Grosvenordale music teacher Diane Paradis which included background information about Diane and photos that were donated by her great nephew George Roch of Denver, CO. Recently, George contacted THS and offered a donation of a violin and case which was Diane's personal instrument. George had researched the manufacturer and learned that the business was located in Putnam, CT. George also included a photo of Diane in her later years playing a piano. Several THS members have commented that they took piano lessons from Diane – perhaps the photo will bring back memories of those lessons. The violin, photos and background information is now on display at the ELM. As always, Sue Vincent has done a great job setting up the display. Thank you to George for the generous donation.

Sunday mornings have been very busy of late—volunteers Sharon Napierata, Paul Provost, Dave Ormsby, Lucille Langlois and newly added Leon Renaud have been moving along cataloging of items and photos at a good pace. Thank you to them for their help.



## Thompson's Joint Walktober and Rail Day Event in Thompson on October 15, 2022

### Tentative Schedule at original Tourtellotte Memorial High School, 2nd floor. Doors open at 10am.

**10:15 am:** Ed DeLuca presentation of materials to THS.

**11:00 am:** Blair Cole - The Director for the PBS movie, "*The Nine Lives of Engine #9*" will show clips from the making of the movie and explains this new movie project on the Great East Thompson 1891 Four Engine Wreck and the upcoming park expansion.

**11:30 am:** Update on the Wiscasset, Waterville and Farmington RR Museum in Alna, ME - the home of Engine #9 by WW&F President Dave Buczkowski.

**12 noon:** Tom Chase, one of the lead researchers for the PBS movie and the 1891 wreck, will discuss new information learned about the 4 engine wreck of December 4, 1891 to be used in Blair Cole's upcoming movie.

**1:15 pm:** "The End of the Line". Mr. John H. Roy will explain the fate of the Southern New England and the Grand Trunk RR resulting from the loss of the Grand Trunk's President, Charles M. Hays, with the sinking of the Titanic in 1912.

At the Thompson Library, for those patrons who have not seen the PBS movie *The Nine Lives of Engine #9*, meet the director Blair Cole and listen to his talk about the creation of the movie before seeing the movie itself for free. The event starts at 12 noon at the Thompson Public Library.

As part of Walktober, from 2:30 to 4:00 PM, Thompson Trails and THS will conduct tours at the Airline State Park in E. Thompson, at the site of the Dec. 4, 1891 Four Engine Wreck.

## Membership Information:

\$100.00 Lifetime Membership  
\$10.00 Individual Membership  
\$15.00 Family Membership  
\$25.00 Contributing Membership  
\$5.00 Student or First Year Gift Membership

Memberships are due by July 1 of each calendar year

Make checks payable to:

**Thompson Historical Society**

**PO Box 47**

**Thompson, CT 06277**

Anyone interested in joining the Thompson Historical Society can contact us at:

**Phone Number:** 401-208-6051

Web Site: [www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)



**Thompson Historical Society**

PO Box 47



## Museum Hours

Typically Open

Sundays 9:00 a.m.—Noon  
Call Joe before you come  
(401) 208-6051

## \*\*\* Volunteers Needed\*\*\*

We are seeking 2 volunteers possessing technical skills with computer hardware, software, fearless website/PowerPoint presentation and historical story creation and delivery abilities. While the hours are long and the pay is nil, the friendships built and the results delivered are magical. If interested, send an email to [marksnay@aol.com](mailto:marksnay@aol.com)

## Officers and Contact Information:

Joseph Iamartino - President  
Ginny Flood - Vice President  
Mark Snay—Director & Archivist  
Sue Vincent - Treasurer  
John Rice - Building Committee Chair  
Abe Gustavson - Director  
Ginny Flood - Director  
Burt Rhodes - Director  
Dr. Chris Wagner - Director  
Kathy Welch - Director  
Kathleen Herbert - Director  
Geoff Bolte - Director  
Roberta Baublitz - Director  
Lisa Berg - Director  
Charlie Obert - Director  
William Steglitz - Director  
David Laabs - Director  
Paul Provost—Director  
Mark Savolis—Director  
Lisa Berg—Director, Newsletter

## **Ellen Larned Memorial Building THS Museum**

339 Thompson Road  
Thompson, CT 06277  
(Opened Sundays 9:00 am to noon)

## **Old Thompson Town Hall**

1 Chase Road  
Thompson, CT 06277  
(Open by appointment)

## **Tourtellotte Memorial Room**

785 Riverside Drive  
North Grosvenordale, CT 06255