



# The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter



Winter 2022

PO Box 47, Thompson CT 06277

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

## Under Our Feet At Quaddick

By Drew Wainacht

The concession stand near the beach at Quaddick Lake State Park doesn't seem to be open any longer but had been operating since 1951 when the swimming area split apart from the larger Quaddick State Forest. On hot days the line of kids waiting for snacks would stretch out over the small grassy field between the parking area and lake. Each year children would drop their share of coins in that grass like summer seeds. The coins would continuously burrow into the soil, older coins deeper as they had a head start. We end up with a perfect strata of history at our concession stand, of our childhoods and our town. In 1965 our country stopped using silver in our coins. They used an inner core of copper clad with an outer layer of nickel-copper alloy that looks like silver. We call these post-1965 coins "clad" coins. Pick up a modern quarter or dime and look at the side, you'll see where the two types of metal meet. As a child, I remember adults telling me to look for silver coins in change and listen to the "silver sound" when dropping coins on the table. We were told not to spend silver as it will be worth something someday. To a child "someday" might as well be never! The reverse design on pennies was changed in 1959 but their copper content remained constant until the early 80s. The myriad styles and consistencies of coins buried in front of that concession stand reflect the greatly changing society of the 20th century, America's century.



**Above:** Pictured coins found Quaddick site-

Many pre-1959 "wheat" pennies.

Silver "Roosevelt" dimes (1946-64) and "Mercury" dimes (1916-45).

Silver "Washington" quarter (1932-64) and silver "Standing Liberty" quarter (1916-1930) (Interestingly, no US quarters were struck in 1931 due to the depression).

Silver War Nickel (1942-45) Nickels were made of silver during WW2 as nickel was needed for the war effort.

Buffalo nickel (1913-1938)

Kennedy Half (clad) This coin began to be minted only four months after Kennedy was assassinated and continued to be made of silver until 1971 (the year of this coin).

Religious pendant, ear ring, silver heart ring, and a 1954 car plate registration.

(not pictured- scores of post-1965 or "modern" coins)

### Inside This Issue:

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The Village Improvement Society has been in existence since the 1840s and has maintained the Thompson Common with the Congregational Church. Former THS President, Jane Vercelli, an accomplished journalist and author, has graciously agreed to write a story about the VIS, a topic she knows well as both Jane and Peter Vercelli were active leaders of the venerable group. Readers with stories on the VIS should contact THS to contribute. THS appreciates the efforts by the VIS group - past, present and future - to keep the Common beautiful.

## Boy Scouts Troop 66 and Explorers, Thompson Hill



*First row from Left: Walfred Olson, Marvin Babbitt; Second from left: David Babbitt, Burton Topliff, William Nizamoff, Clifford Svening, William Leveille, Donat Laroche, Kenneth Olson, David Johnson; Third from left: Paul Morway, Philip Leveille; Fourth row from left: ???, Donald Walberg*

**Looking for 1940s through 1970  
period photos of the Rt 12/Rawson Ave  
section of No. Grosvenordale**

We are needing photos of Tojo's restaurant, AKA Hillside Restaurant, Pevnar's Drug Store, the Arrow Grill, and the barber shop across the street as well as photos of the inside and outside of the youth club that sat in the area that is now Mill Town parking. Rawson Avenue was built about 1955. We would like to know more about this area, the road and trolley line/building that became the barber shop on that corner. Help is needed with photographs of this important area.

Dave Ormsby, who grew up in this area, is writing up the history of this section of town for THS.

## A Historical Talk on Ice Harvesting by Ken Ethier

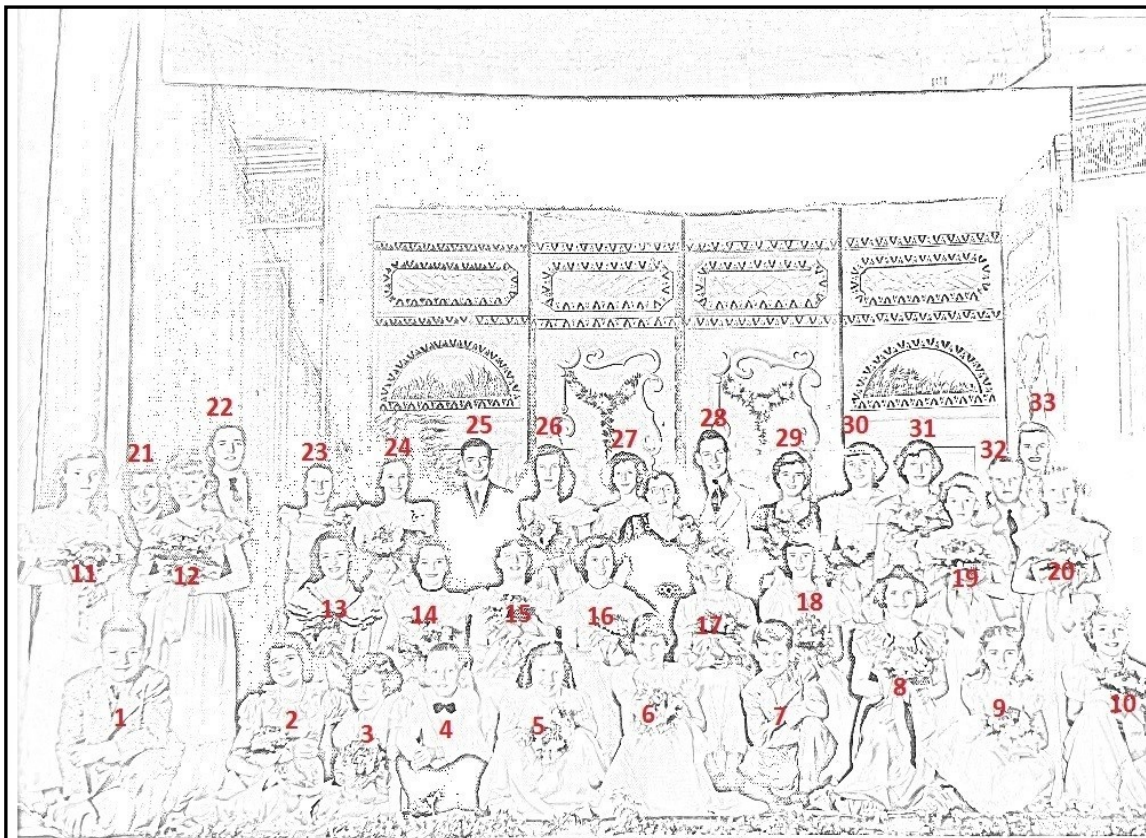
Ken Ethier, the go-to guy on Auburn history, has been lecturing on various topics at local historical societies for many years. His interests are in ice harvesting, trolleys, steam trains, and antique farm tractors. He will be bringing a selection of his ice harvesting tools and memorabilia to the December 8th program at the Thompson Library at 6 pm.





# Miss Paradis Recital at Salle Union Hall No. Grosvenordale, Early 1950's

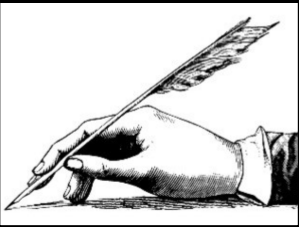
(Reference page 113, Echos I book for photo. Send us names of the unidentified people please.)



- 1 Robert Faucher
- 2
- 3 Helen Hession
- 4 John Bates
- 5
- 6
- 7 Dave Ormsby
- 8 Lucille Mandeville
- 9
- 10 Beverly Valade
- 11
- 12 Lucille Lebeau
- 13 Clarissa Seney
- 14 ? Picard
- 15 Rina Almin
- 16 Jacqueline Boulet
- 17 Clarice Bonczek
- 18 Estelle Revenelle
- 19 Florence Bizailon
- 20 Joanne Quinn
- 21 Raymond Faucher
- 22 Louis Menoche  
(He played the organ too, I believe)
- 23
- 24 Janet Daniels
- 25 ? Duchesne
- 26
- 27 Therese Labonte
- 28 Norman Hebert
- 29
- 30 Georgette Durand
- 31 Joan Girard
- 32 Donald Suprenant
- 33



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



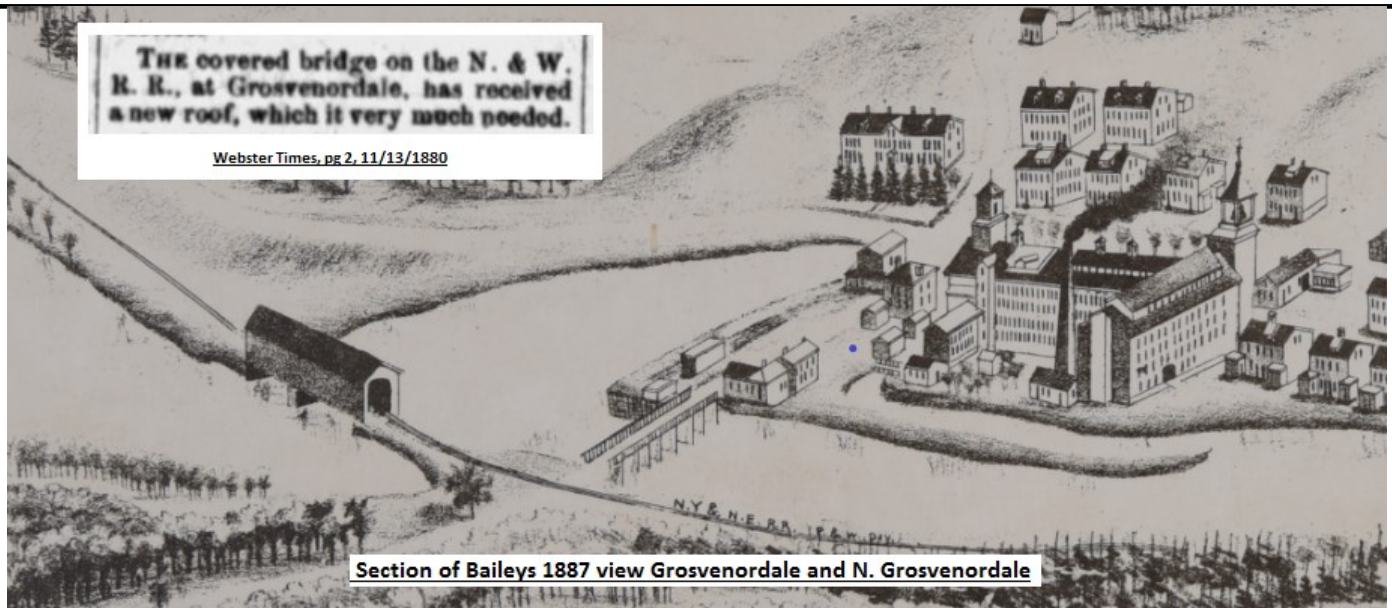
Friends,

We have had a number of successful THS events this year. Historical archive work and beneficial town projects of many types continue to get pushed through by our volunteers. Books, magazines, newsletters, movies - our members are working to support all these for Thompson related stories, with many contributors located across the states and globe. As I write this for our latest newsletter, the holiday gift shop crew is getting revved up. The library, the school, the Tourtellotte Trust, the town, other historical societies and THS interact vigorously. Our computer folks and the dynamic duo of maintenance do their thing every week. We answer many dozens of questions every month from homeowners, businesses and folks who are moving to our town or who are reminiscing about the town they once called home. My point in writing this is to celebrate the kinship, the spirit of teamwork and collaboration that make this great work a joy for me. I cannot be more proud of all our volunteers and you, our loyal supporters.

Please remember too the venerable Village Improvement Society (VIS). Started before the Civil War, the VIS needs local support to ensure the church-owned Common is well maintained. The historic elm trees, the 300 years of written history of the center of Thompson Hill village and the centuries of Native Americans living there near the "Indian Spring" before the written history began, makes this a treasured site in our town.

With great appreciation for your continued support.

Joe



### New Milltown Grill Parking, Rt 12

The sidewalk, parking and roadwork near the Mill Town Grill on Route 12 has been nicely done. Our thanks to the town, state and contractors involved to improve our town.

Keep the progress coming!

J.I.

# Is Thompson the original source for the term Swamp Yankee?

By Mark Snay

In present day, with the numerous sources of news reporting and the technology of reporting it, we likely take for granted how quickly news reports are issued after the occurrence of the events. Regardless of the subject, something occurring on the other side of our planet is dispatched and received in a matter of minutes, maybe seconds. While the intentions of many sources are intended to be accurate, such is not always the case. Step back 246 years and consider the technology and reporting of that time and it may give more appreciation to what we have today. This story, "Home Life in 1776" was found in the September 22, 1876 edition of the Perrysburg Journal newspaper, Perrysburg, OH, and tells of an event that occurred in Thompson which was documented by Ellen Larned. Some of our members may already be familiar with this story as she wrote about it in both her History of Windham County CT and Historic Gleanings in Windham County CT, however, this version has additional details of home life at that time. Several references to this story can be found on the web to include the July 1969 edition of Yankee Magazine where it was reported that this may have been the origin of the term "Swamp Yankee". There has been much conjecture as to the original source of Swamp Yankee, none definitive, so it is safe to assume this incident could have been the source.

One can imagine that Ellen told this story with much pride as it was her grandmother Rebecca "Becky" Wilkinson Larned that stood her ground and did not allow the rumors to cause her to join the others to hide in the swamp. Other relatives named in the article are her father

George Larned, the little boy born in March. Ellen's grandfather/George's father Daniel Larned, whose "flourishing business" near the "Great Elm" was located in the South Neighborhood of Thompson Parish and is believed to been at about where present day Mary Crest Drive and Rt 21 meet in Putnam. The "grandmothers" of George were Rachel (Green) Larned and Mary (Rhodes) Wilkinson. Great grandmother was Hannah Bryant Larned Leavens who was first married to George's great grandfather William Larned and later to Justice Joseph Leavens. After Justice Leavens' death, Hannah moved into the household of Daniel. Other names mentioned: "Priest Russel" was Rev. Nodiah Russel, "Captain of Company" was Captain Stephen Crosby" who died during the retreat at New York, "Deacon G." is believed to be Deacon Lusher Gay and his son "young Joseph" Gay. The "Paygar Indians" were the Nipmuc Natives that lived on a reservation in Dudley, MA, now part of Webster, MA. The word "Paygar" is a typo on the part of the newspaper and should have been "Paygen" or "Pegan" as the Nipmucs of Dudley were often referred to. The threat of "Malbone's murderous negroes" was referring to Godfrey Malbone Jr. of a section of Pomfret that is now Brooklyn, CT. Malbone and his father made their fortune from trading, mostly rum and slaves, was a staunch Loyalist and owned many slaves. The identities of "Sam Cheere", "Aunt Nabby" and "Uncle Asa" are still unknown – possibly some other document will shed light on who they were.

## HOME-LIFE IN 1776.

A HUNDRED years ago social distinctions were far more clearly defined than at present. Democracy had not then leveled the lines. The lower classes were too poor to ape the style of living of the gentry, and thus the homes of the various classes were widely dissimilar. There were aristocratic, palatial homes, the homes of the court circles, the British governmental officials; there were the stately homes of the rich old families in the large towns; the hospitable homes of the old-country families, the landed gentry of the colonies; the dignified homes of the clergy; the comfortable homes of the substantial farmer, the humble homes of the day-laborer; and the huts and hovels passing for homes occupied by the lowest stratum of society. The home that fashions itself most clearly to my mind among them all is one in which a

certain little boy was born, in March, 1776. A Connecticut country home, ranking socially just below the gentry, among the upper hundred of the middle class, a home like those of many men who led in life in town meetings and carried the country through the seven-years' struggle. The head of this household, though yet a young man, had already filled many civil and military offices. Previous to the breaking out of the war he had established a flourishing business, exchanging the surplus produce of the surrounding country for West India goods, in Providence, and through the agency of Rhode Island's plucky privateers and blockade-runners was still enabled to supply his family and neighbors with those most vital necessities, West India rum and molasses. Influential and active in town and business affairs, it would hardly do to designate him as the sole "head of the household." That position would have

been disputed by a fair and resolute young woman, who managed its domestic affairs with much skill and efficiency. They had been married some six years, and the little boy of '76 was their third child.

If this little fellow had been born in some families in the town he would have been bundled off three miles, on that same raw March day, to be duly baptized by Priest Russel; but his christening was after another fashion. The military company of which his father was Lieutenant happened around that very afternoon, and our little boy was brought out and exhibited, and hailed as "George," with three rousing cheers, and had his health drank in good Jamaica. Triplet names were not the fashion. There was but one George in '76 for whom a soldier's boy could be named, so the Washington was withheld as an extravagant superfluity. The baptizing

(Cont'd on Page 6)



was deferred till a more propitious season. George's mother was of Rhode Island origin and less strenuous upon that point than her Connecticut neighbors; but his father had imbibed too much of the spirit of deaconic ancestry to ignore this important ceremony, so after peace came he publicly "owned the covenant," and had six children baptized upon the strength of it.

Home-life in 1776 was greatly affected and disturbed by the war; but to little George it made little difference. He was a strong, healthy child, full of life and play, and had plenty of people to tend and amuse him. Besides father and mother, sister and brother, there were uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, and a very wonderful great-grandmother, who had reared seven sons and over fifty grandchildren and tended and trotted more babies than could be numbered. There was Sam Cheere, the half-breed Indian, full of tricks and capers; and Aunt Nabby, the spinster, crooning dolorous love songs. They lived in a pleasant house, under a spreading elm—a "genteel" house, with gambrel roof, dormer windows and all the modern improvements. Its "great room" was the wonder and pride of the neighborhood, with its strip of carpet and mahogany chairs, its glass-buffet and picture-tilas about the fireplace. Little George seldom had a peep at its shut-up splendors, nor did he occupy the bedroom save at night and nap-time. In those wide-awake days sleeping-rooms were of small account. Any nook would answer that would hold a feather-bed and plenty of blankets and woolen coverlets. George's mother and grandmothers would have scorned the thought of a nursery or nurse girl. His great wooden cradle stood upon the hearth-stone in the big kitchen, where he could see all that was going on in the family. He could see great logs of wood kindling up and burning away into ashes; their flames reflecting upon the bright pewter of the dresser. There was the high-backed settle, keeping the draughts out; and the round-topped table, tipping back after meal-time into an arm-chair. There were baking and brewing, and washing and churning, and dyeing and spinning and all sorts of work going on around him. Sometimes the merry cobbler brought his bench there and made the family shoes out of their own cowhides and calf-skins, or the tailor came to fashion the homespun spring garments. As summer came on he was taken to the work-room, to see the cumbrous loom and its flashing shuttles, and left to tumble on the grass under the great elm, with his little brother and sister. Aunt Nabby, drudging through the week for two and sixpence, could not find time to do up dainty white baby-clothes. Our baby had fine wrought robes, packed away in the high case of drawers in the spare chamber, and rolled about on the grass in simple slips of linsay-woolsey.

While the children were playing about, happy and heedless, many grave cares occupied the household. It was a summer of many alarms and anxieties. The seat of war had been transferred from Boston to New York, and forces were marshaling for desperate conflict. Company after company mustered and marched forth to the Continental army, and still more men were demanded, as

different points were threatened. The militia of Eastern Connecticut were summoned successively to New London, to Rhode Island, to Long Island, and to the vicinity of New York. These various calls kept our Lieutenant upon the march the greater part of the summer, and through the dark September days following the retreat from Long Island. His regiment was then at the front, flying discomfited before the advancing British. Brothers and friends were cut down by his side or hurried off to the fatal prisonship. Whole companies were stricken with disease, so that scarcely a man was fit for duty. Yet the distress at home was even greater, if possible, than at the camp. The whole charge of house, farm, and business, of helpless age and infancy, fell upon the mistress of the household. Anxiety for absent husband and friends and for the safety of the patriot cause and army made these burdens still heavier. Letters from the camp brought only evil tidings. The Captain of their company had fallen dead in the retreat from Manhattan Island, and friends and neighbors had been slain. Others were suffering from wounds and sickness, and "no mercy shown them." The Continentals were retreating from point to point, the British hotly pursuing and closing around them, and any day might witness their utter defeat and annihilation. The forts upon the Hudson were in danger and all Western Connecticut open to invasion. With anxious hearts the wife and grandmothers discussed these terrible prospects and waited further developments. But the next day and the next brought no tidings whatever. There were no mails and telegraphs, with daily communications, and no chance messenger appeared for many days. The whole neighborhood shared the suspense and anxiety. Every able-bodied man had gone into service. Every household had its anxious women, who, while caring for their homes and gathering the autumn harvest, wearied themselves with vain conjecture. What marvel that a chance report should throw them all into a panic? News came that their own neighborhood was threatened—that Tories north and south of them had risen, and, with Dudley's Paygar Indians and Malbone's murderous negroes, were marching straight upon them, burning and slaughtering everything before them. Well might a company of decrepit men and helpless women quail at such tidings. "The Tories are coming!" "The Tories are coming!" was their horrified cry. It was madness to think of withstanding such an onset; so the panic-stricken neighbors at The Corner decided to leave their homes immediately and take refuge in a dismal swamp. An eager boy brought the news to our friends at the Great Elm-tree. Great as was the shock, our Lieutenant's wife was not overwhelmed by it. She was not one to run at the first report of danger. Children and old people, house and goods were in her hands, and she would stand by them to the last and do what she could to defend them. Sending a boy for the bullet-molds, she built up a rousing fire in the huge kitchen fireplace, filling it with great iron and brass kettles and every iron implement that could be mustered, and announced her intention of meeting the enemy with scalding water and red-hot irons. Grand-

mother, with her Calvinistic faith and ninety years, was equally resolute, quietly responding, as she settled back into her chimney corner: "If I am to be killed by the Tories to-night, why then I *shall* be. So I'll e'en stay with Becky." Little George and the other children must have delighted in the clamor and clatter, the great roaring fire, the bullet-running, the sharp-shooting and skirmishing with affrighted neighbors. "Tell Becky," said the swamp-seekers, "that hot irons will never do for the British." In spite of her heroic example, they hurried off to the place of refuge. "Thithter," pleaded poor old lame Asa, as he hobbled along—"Thithter, I've forgot my plathter." "Hurry up, Asa. You'll never want a plaster again in this world," replied the comforting sister. The swamp, when reached, was so damp, moist and unpleasant that all could join with one disconsolate granny in her fervent ejaculation: "I'd give a wedge of goold as big as my foot for one good dram."

One other family remained tranquilly at home, ready to meet whatever might befall it. Good Deacon G. had gone with his four eldest sons to the battle, leaving family and farm in charge of the fifth son, a youth of seventeen. He was a stout young fellow, and could handle a musket as well as any lad; but his trust was not in carnal weapons. Hot irons and cold swamps he thought were but vain things for safety. It was a household of the true-blue puritan type, which had baptized each child when it was eight days old, and kept the Sabbath from sunset to sunset in strictest sanctity. Children of the Abrahamic Covenant, why should they fear? Young Joseph went calmly on with his day's work, after hearing the tidings, "did the nightly chores," and then, calling the family together for the usual evening worship, read comforting words in the old Bible, brought from Dedham, and "led" in prayer. Thus stayed and comforted they passed the night in safety. Nothing was heard of the expected invaders. The morning brought fresh hope and courage. The weary fugitives stole home from the swamp and "Becky's" hot water helped furnish an early breakfast. In the course of the day the report was investigated, and found to have arisen from a trifling affray in a neighboring town, and the frenzied alarm and panic proved wholly without occasion. Ridiculous as it was, it had done good service, diverting the careworn women from their worries and surmises and giving the disheartened soldiers something to laugh at. Those who fled to the swamp were overwhelmed with volleys and shafts of ridicule. Their fright and flight and absurd sayings were told all over town, and even carried to camp—a bit of farce between the acts of a sadder tragedy. "Becky's" heroism was greatly commended, and she was thenceforth deemed equal to any emergency. Her courage and endurance were afterward severely tested. This "glimpse" gives but one incident out of many. For seven weary years home-life was shadowed by cares and anxieties, privations and bereavements; yet perhaps among them all no darker hours were experienced than those in later life so vividly depicted in stories of "the Tory alarm" of 1776.—Ellen D. Larned, in *The Independent*.



## Picker Sticks

### UNIQUE BUSINESS IN SAME FAMILY FOR 82 YEARS

(By Beverly Bates)

Francis J. Bates and sons, manufacture hickory and laminated picker sticks. The business was founded by Walter Bates in 1870. Four generations of the family have made picker sticks.

A picker stick is used in woolen and cotton weaving mills. There is one on each end of a loom and it is used to throw the shuttle across the loom.

The hickory used in the manufacture of picker sticks must be selected, second growth, all white and tough.

Today the best hickory comes from North Carolina and Tennessee.

At the present time the picker stick is playing a very important part in the defense program because a loom cannot run without a picker stick.

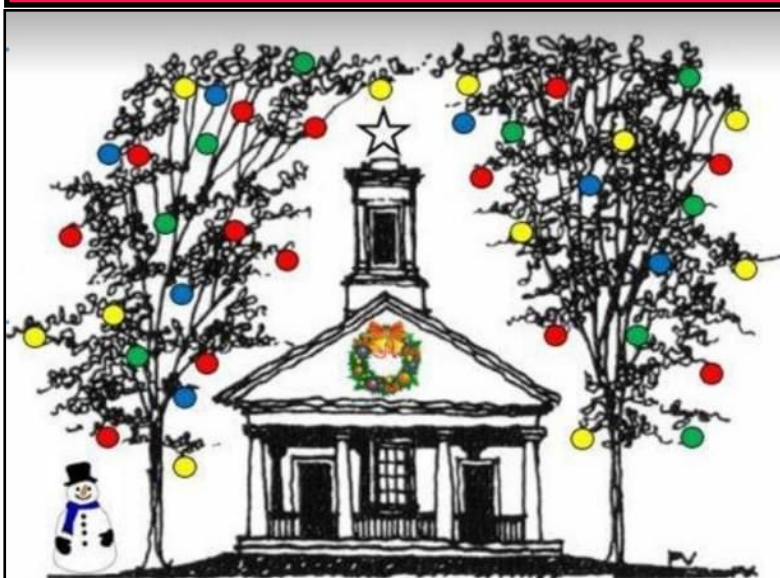
Francis J. Bates and sons supply the largest mills in New England, the South and Canada and also export sticks to foreign countries.

## Woodworking—Thompson Hill

Furniture and woodworking was established on Thompson Hill in the early 1800s. The Bates family operated on or near Thompson Hill for generations making tables, cabinets and caskets. Nearby was the Baldwin carriage factory not far from the Rt 193 and Rt 21 junction. A Mr. Coman built small wooden items for use as letterboxes and jewelry chests. The Bates family evolved with the times and moved to picker sticks of non-splintering wood until the decline of the textile age in New England.

## Men's Emergency Shopping Day

December 24th 10 am - 1 pm or until the men get hungry or we run out of stuff to sell, whichever comes first.



**It's That Time of the Year Again!**  
*Come Join Us at the Thompson Historical Society's*  
**Annual Christmas Shop**

Open Black Friday and every weekend 10 am to 4 pm.  
Until Christmas Eve.

## Quilt Raffle



Queen size quilt made by Alison Boutaugh to be raffled off at our Holiday Gift Shop. Tickets will be \$5.00 each. Drawing will be Christmas Eve.

Many thanks for the support to Alison and the entire staff at the Thompson Library. THS and the library co-operate on many projects, displays, talks, media and of course, publications. We use the facilities for research meetings too.

Many thanks for the support.

## 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**

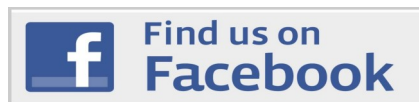
**PO Box 47**

**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  
Thompson, CT 06277



### 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  
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  
(Open by appointment)