



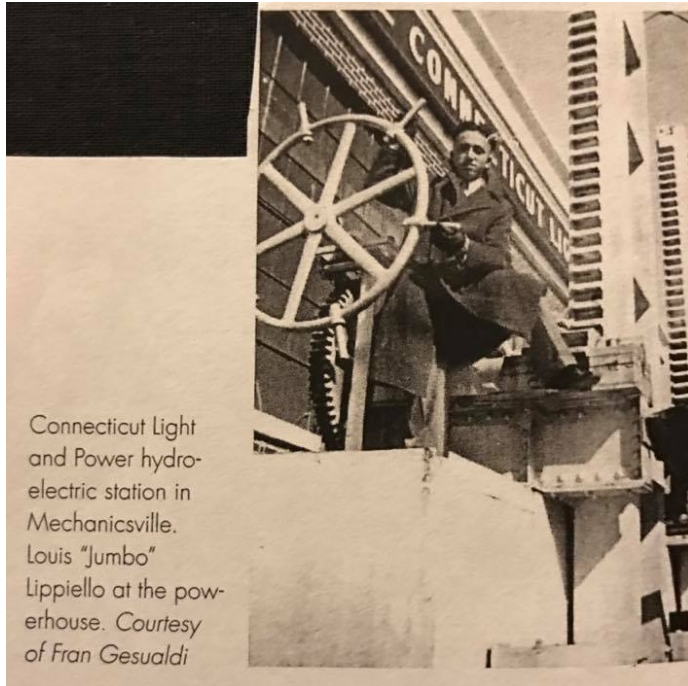
The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter



Spring 2019

PO Box 47, Thompson CT 06277

www.thompsonhistorical.com



Connecticut Light and Power hydro-electric station in Mechanicsville. Louis "Jumbo" Lippiello at the powerhouse. Courtesy of Fran Gesualdi

(Photo compliments of Jane Ellison)

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Schedule of Events:

The Man in the Net

Co-Sponsored by the THS and Thompson Public Library
May 9, 2019 at 7 p.m.
at Thompson Public Library

THS Annual Meeting

June 4, 2019 at Greystone Farm
Dinner at 6 p.m. Meeting at 7 p.m.

Historic River Mill Revitalization

(from First Selectman Ken Beausoleil)

The revitalization of our historic River mill is still moving forward. We continue to work with the developer who has provided concept drawings of the mill showing up to 300 market rate apartments with amenities that include a court yard, pool, gym, event space, restaurant as well as other commercial opportunities. The town has completed the \$218,000 Brownfield Grant that provided Phase I, II and III study of 929 and Phase I of the 915 location. The town has been awarded, through DECD, a Brownfield area wide revitalization grant in the amount of \$187,000 which includes a 10% match by the developer to complete the investigation of the 915 location. This grant will also study the corridor between Belding Mill site and the River mill to make recommendations on such things as intersections, recreation, pedestrian walking/bicycling that will bring back the rural charm. This will make the corridor a desired place to live, visit and foster small businesses for generations to come.



Above: The historic mill c.1900 looking north. Below: 1940 Christmas party. Not only was the mill a place to work, but it was also a center of our community. This party was held at the gym and now known as the Knights of Columbus. Photos: THS

The A. Vito Company of Thompson

Windham County Transcript Jan. 1911 - Thompson Column

The A. Vito Company of Thompson have organized, with a capital of \$10,000, and at a meeting of the directors and stockholders held in Willimantic, the following officers were elected: President, Edward Murolo; secretary, Louis Murolo; treasurer, Antonio Vito. Of the authorized capital \$5,000 has been paid in and there are 400 shares at a par value of \$25 each. The company is organized for the purpose of general construction work.

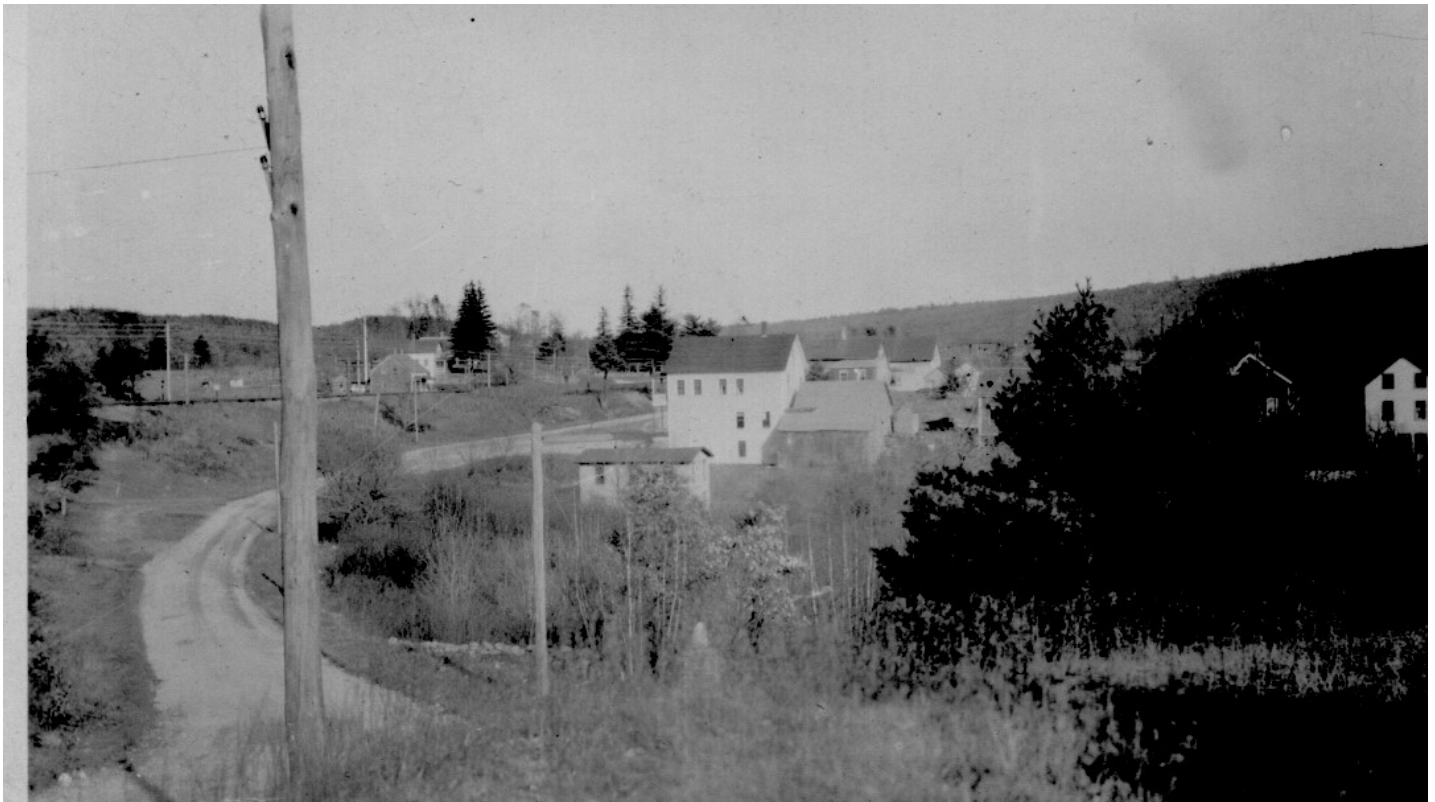


Windham County Transcript Jan. 1911 Thompson Column

"This unidentified photo in the THS digital collection is very similar to a photo shown in the Thompson Bicentennial Memory book. Based on the information in the Memory book and the similarities of the landscape, work being performed and equipment in use, we believe that this may be the Antonio Vito Company paving Rt 12 in North Grosvenordale, possibly near TMHS. Please contact us if anyone has more information to share about this image".

Worcester County News

East Thompson Village Photo



Above: The Village of East Thompson c. 1910.

The Great Train Wreck of 1910

From the Windham County Transcript 29 Dec. 1910

Bad Freight Wreck. Engineer Killed and Trainmen Injured in Smash at North Grosvenordale. Nearly a dozen freight cars and a big locomotive weighing many tons were piled into a heap of twisted steel and splintered wood, in one of the worst wrecks that the Norwich branch of the Midland Division has known in fifteen years, when the East Hartford freight, running at about 45 miles an hour, rammed into seven freight cars which had been left on the main line in front of North Grosvenordale station, on Thursday evening, at about 6.30 o'clock. Charles Tufts, engineer of the fast freight, met death beneath his engine, after faithfully staying at his post. Fireman John E. Murphy of Putnam was badly cut about his head, while brakeman James B. Peters of Charlestown, Mass. sustained a broken knee-cap. The blame for the wreck is said to have been caused by the negligence of the flagman, Joseph Mahan, of Webster, who



had been on the road only a short time and was not thoroughly acquainted with all the details of his work. Mahan is 23 years of age, and was quite unstrung after the occurrence, and explained how it happened that he was not at his station. In a talk with a reporter soon after the accident, Mahan is credited as saying: "They never told me a thing about going out on the main track at North Grosvenordale, and I remained in the caboose, because I thought the train was on a siding. I wasn't asleep, but I always got orders as to what to do when we stopped, and I wasn't given any instructions this time, so I thought everything was all right. After the smash, our engineer, Lavigne, came to the caboose and said that I had caused the wreck, and to get out with my flag and flag any train that might come along. I went out, and until 8 o'clock stayed at my post. Then some of the train-



(Above: North Grosvenordale Station)

men came to me and said I was a fool to stay, as the others had cleared out."

Upon the arrival of the wreckers, work began at once to clear the line. The wrecked cars were pulled from the track and swung to either side. Great fires were started, in order to burn the great piles of wreckage and whole sides of freight cars were placed on the burning piles. The wreckers arrived about midnight and by four o'clock a clear track had been made with only one train delayed, which was the boat train from Worcester, sent around from Webster to East Thompson, arriving in Putnam nearly two hours late.

Fireman John Murphy, who was injured in the railroad wreck at North Grosvenordale Thursday night, is a brother-in-law of John Kennedy of Danielson.

Wrecking crews worked all day on Sunday, clearing away the rubbish at North Grosvenordale. The big locomotive was picked out of the river, where it had lain since Thursday night. Many from this vicinity spent the day watching the workmen clearing away the debris.

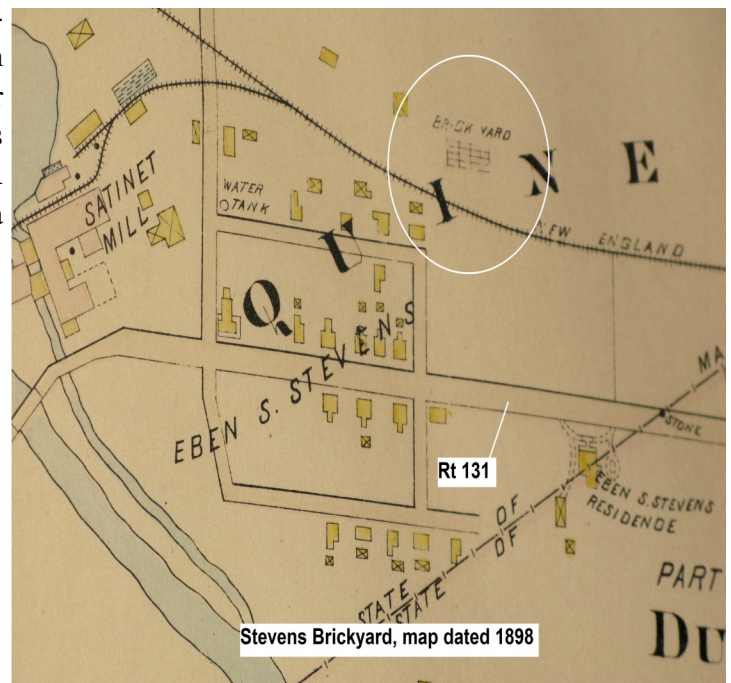
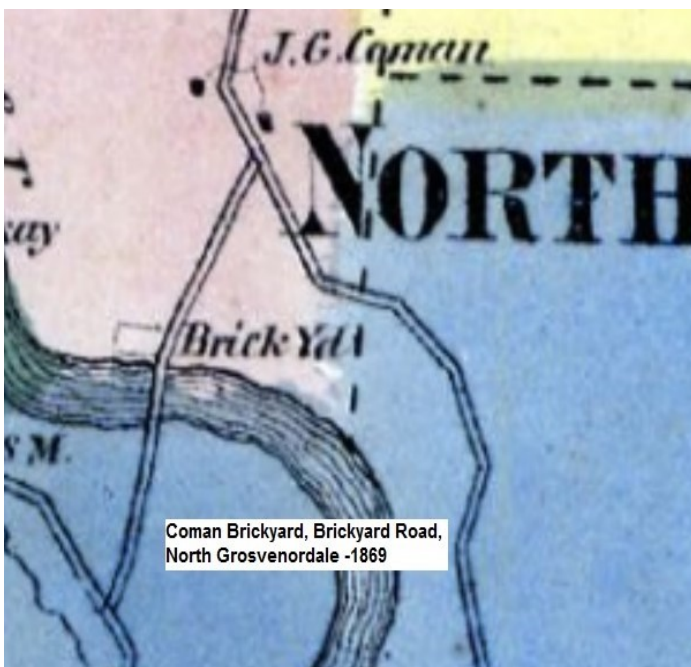
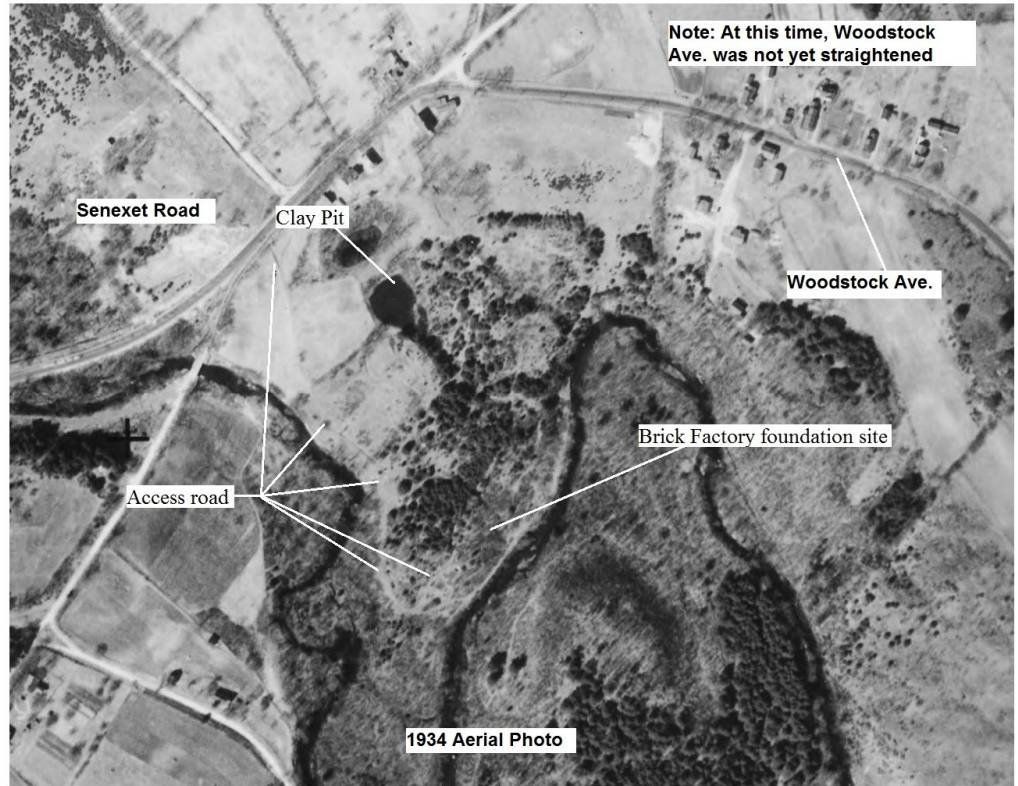


Above: Images of East Thompson Station from two different directions. The 1910 N. Grosvenordale Wreck is often confused with the more infamous 1891 Four Engine Wreck in East Thompson.

Was There a Brick Mill in West Thompson?

Simeon Allen owned a brickyard in what is today the north-west corner of Putnam. This area was a part of West Thompson prior to the incorporation of Putnam in 1855. A Thompson land record transferring property from Abel Allton to Simeon and Asa Allen, dated Feb. 1802, mentions a brickyard already in existence at the time of the land transfer. A stone foundation, believed to be the brick factory, was still present until 1949 when the stones were removed and used as part of a foundation for a new house. A short distance west of the foundation was a clay pit with an access ramp on the foundation side, the ramp is

believed to be used for easy access into the pit. The foundation and pit were located on the west edge of the Little River, on the east side of Harrisville Road and directly across from Senexet Road. The pit and the access road from Harrisville Road are visible in the 1934 aerial photo of the area. A second brickyard in Thompson was located on the north side of the Quinebaug River and the west side of present day Brickyard Road. This was operated by John G. Coman in the mid 1800's. A third brickyard, although not in Thompson, was just a



few hundred feet over the border in Dudley, MA. It bordered the north side of the railroad tracks, across Rt. 197 from the Stevens mansion, and was operated between 1868 and 1895 by Sylvester Stevens. Our thanks to Linda Branniff, Nancy Jorgensen Miles and Ken Bove for their help and information.

Honoring Those Who Served

Over the past five years the THS has been working on collecting the names of those from Thompson who have served in the military. The book *Thompson, Connecticut Men and Women Who Served in the Armed Forces; Revolutionary War to World War II*, February 7, 2018 Edition, includes 1,371 names of the Thompson soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen who served from the Lexington Alarm in 1775 to the Second World War. The list is available electronically as a PDF at the Thompson Historical Society's Website.

If you have any changes or additions, please contact the THS.

Tourtellotte Board of Trustees Update

The Tourtellotte Board of Trustees held a meeting in January with Crestwood Advisors of Boston, MA, to review the Trust's year-end earnings. In spite of the 2018 market volatility, the Trust stands at a healthy \$2.9M, nearly \$400,000 above the principle base established in 2009. The health of the trust enables the Board of Trustees to continue the restoration work that began at the inception of the Trust. This year's major projects included Phase 1 of the 1909 TMHS Window Restoration Project.

William Birch, Director of Maintenance, Thompson Public Schools and project coordinator, reported to the Board that Phase 1 of the 1909 TMHS Building Window Project was complete. The cost of Phase 1 was nearly \$275,000. This year the Board voted to limit the budget for the upcoming year in order to rebuild the trust for Phase 2 of the window project. Joe Lindley, Board of Trustees member stated, "These high efficiency windows, which match the 1909 design, are the first step of the final stage of a ten-year plan to restore the exterior of the building."



Left: This picture shows the recently installed 2018 windows. The installation team was working on the lower left window on the right side of the building when the picture was taken. They replaced the c1980s windows and now match the original windows installed in 1909. The new windows are high-efficiency doubled-paned windows. Phase 2 and 3 is expected to take 3-5 years. THS photo, Lower left: The TMHS building circa 1910. Did you know that the first class included the junior high classes?



Above: The new museum windows. These windows will help preservation efforts of the items located in the Memorial Room. Below-center of the photo is an installer installing windows above the main door. The doors were also restored. Since 2009 the Tourtellotte Trust has supported nearly \$1.3M in repairs and restoration efforts. The goal is to bring the building back to its 1909 grandeur. THS photo.

From The President's Quill - By: Joseph Iamartino



Traditions on the Holidays, previously Holy Days, have evolved as we know so well. Ancient pagan icons celebrating fertility, bunnies and eggs, were integrated into Catholic Church activities resulting in the Easter egg tradition. Most people know rabbits don't lay eggs but we give our children some years of confusion around this topic.

The Nordic, Celtic and Germanic mysticism around hallowed woods ended up, through various historic twists and turns, in the modern Christmas tree and Yule log.

Washington's Birthday has morphed into the collective President's Day.

Decoration Day, started by people going to decorate Civil War graves after that war, has become Memorial Day, a day remembering all those who have died serving their country. Labor Day in many countries is called Workers Day and is the same as the very historic May Day, once celebrated with joy and celebration with joyful May baskets for teachers and others. In America, Labor Day is the first Monday in September and became a national holiday in 1894 celebrating the labor movement and worker rights.

Halloween! All Hallows' Eve is another Celtic pagan tradition adopted by the Catholic religion. In many cultures, it was believed that one day per year, departed souls returned to their homes. The traditions surrounding the use of candles, trick or treats, masks and costumes evolved from that superstition. The Celts made that Halloween evening the last of their bountiful Harvest season. So, it is no surprise that we are mixing good and bad in this holiday, the ghosts and the grim reaper, candy, decorations, costumes and happy games for the children. A mixture of celebrating the season of harvest and mourning for the hard winter ahead. Makes sense in a way at least to me considering there were no electric lights or convenient home heating systems then. When it got dark in Northern Europe in the depths of winter, it could be dark for 16 hours in a day! Who wouldn't want something to celebrate?! But once again, this sure was confusing stuff for the children. I will never forget my daughter Marissa's terror when she saw her brother wearing a Halloween mask the first time. He would put it on and she screamed. He would take it off and she smiled. Over and over. She eventually learned. We have many holiday icons like Santa Claus, elves, fairies, the occasional dwarf, trolls, leprechauns, sprites, gremlins, hobgoblins etc. These are just a few examples. Whenever we celebrate a holiday, religious or not, consider the origin. This whole topic has always fascinated me. Don't get me started on Greek and Roman holidays too!

So, when I was recently asked what and when is Old Farmer's Day, I enjoyed doing the research because I did not know for sure. I do know that this event is widely celebrated around the globe. It is now celebrated on October 12th in the USA but varies in each country. In some of the states, one being Maryland, they called this 'Farmers Day' as it happened in August. It was a day set aside for families to picnic at the beach. Since the farming life before mechanization was hard work, the rarity of vacation day made it my grandmother's most favorite memory of her early family life.

It seems the mill in Aug 17, 188 in Grosvenordale had a similar event. In the clipping to the right, Webster Times mentions the event and other goings-on. Contributed by Mark Snay.

GROSVENORDALE.

The mill shuts down August 18th, in order that the help can go on the excursion to Mystic Island.

(Webster Times 8/17/1888)

Pictures from the Past - Mechanicsville Village School During the 1880's



Left: Mechanicsville Village School during the 1880s. We know it was "picture day," as the girls had their best dresses on and the boys were wearing shoes. Because of the transportation challenges faced by those who live in a multi-village town, each village had to construct their own schools. Many one-room. The building no longer stands but was once located in the little picnic park near the water on Rt 12. THS Photo.

Items You May Not Have Known

Q. What was the cost of the new Tourtellotte Memorial High School in 1910?

A. *The 1910 Windham County Newspaper printed this article.*

COST \$134,207.

Tourtellotte Memorial High School in
Town of Thompson.

The following previously unpublished figures show the cost of the new Tourtellotte High School in the town of Thompson. The figures cover the cost of school and grounds: General contract, \$45,299.51; cellar and foundation, \$5,839.68; granite, \$3,287; limestone, \$13,523.50; iron and steel work, \$5,540; iron stairs, \$1,957; marble and terrazo, \$3,218.35; stucco, \$3,067; plumbing, \$1,464.93; heating, \$6,800; electric wiring, \$1,474.50; electric fixtures and telephones, \$2,013.85; decorations, \$1,450; hardware, \$475.74; clocks, \$672; lockers, \$293.09; miscellaneous, \$393.42; architect, \$5,042.63; total cost of building, \$103,913.20; grounds, \$14,054.19; granite steps, \$432.79; water main, \$732.54; sewer, \$362.57; gate entrances, \$2,326.78; furniture, \$5,492.73; miscellaneous, \$1,534.69; insurance for three years, \$1,649.56. Robert Wilson, the general contractor, failed, and it cost to finish his contract, (to be collected of bonding company) \$3,709.23. Total cost of building, furnishings and grounds, \$134,207.28.

This is undoubtedly the most costly school building in this end of the state. The figures given above contain no hint of the value of the beautiful collection of paintings, statuary, rare china and other art treasures that have been placed in the Tourtellotte Memorial room at the school, but they are known to be worth many thousands of dollars.

Do You Have a Question?

Contact us on Facebook or send us an Email

Archivist Corner -By: Mark Snay

Back in November 2018, THS was loaned a large volume of photos from the estate of Lois Bixby Thompson. This collection dates as far back as the 1860's and covers a wide range of the Bixby family of East Thompson and surrounding area. Joe Iamartino and Burt Rhodes, when not selling Christmas trees, spent the better part of November, through early February, digitizing this collection. Because this was a loan, we needed to make it a priority over cataloging other donations, which can create quite the back log, especially at the rate that donations have been received of late. While space is not available to list all that we have received, here is a list of just a few of the items we have received:

- Bell Howell 88mm film projector from Blair Cole.
- Kodak carousel slide projector with carousels from Blair Cole.
- Seth Thomas NO. 2 Regulator clock which originally hung in the Grosvenordale Company office in Grosvenordale from Kathy Kelly.
- Visitors log book from the Russian Bear Tea Room from Josh Snow and the Snow family.
- Two volume set of books "The Golden Days of Thompson Speedway and Raceway" from publisher Dalton Walton and author Terry O'Neil.
- Portrait of Peter Keily from anonymous (the person that dropped it off did not leave their name).
- Scrapbook containing many Thompson related news clippings from James Anderson.
- Crosby family photos/letters, post cards, school slates and more from Mary Huber and Betsy Huber Port.
- Scarf or belt clasp found metal detecting from Mike Pachen.

The list goes on and we apologize for not being able to list all items that were generously donated to THS. Thank you to all for your generosity.

Members who love to shop on line could help us raise money for maintenance of our two historical buildings by using **AMAZON SMILE**. It is the same as your Amazon account but donates .05% of your purchases to the Thompson Historical Society when you designate us as your choice. There is no cost. If you have questions about joining call Sue Vincent 860-923-5728. Thank you.

Membership Information:

- \$10.00 Individual Membership
- \$15.00 Family Membership
- \$25.00 Contributing Membership
- \$5.00 Student Membership

Memberships are due by July 1 of each calendar year

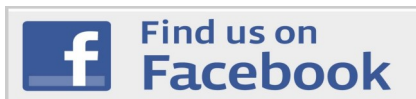
Make checks payable to:

Thompson Historical Society
Po Box 47
Thompson, CT 06277

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

Phone Number: 860-928-5527

Web Site: www.thompsonhistorical.org



Museum Hours

Typically Open
 Sundays 9:00 a.m.—Noon
 To Confirm Call Joe at
 (603) 657-6205

Officers and Contact Information:

Joseph Iamartino - President
 Joseph Lindley - Vice President
 Sue Vincent - Treasurer
 Mark Snay - Secretary, Senior Archivist
 John Rice - Building Committee Chair
 Abe Gustavson - Director
 Ginny Flood - Director
 Burt Rhodes - Director
 Dr. Chris Wagner - Director
 Paul Hughes - Director
 Kathy Welch - Director
 Kathleen Herbert - Director
 John Brynga - Director
 Roberta Baublitz - Director
 Lisa Berg - Director

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)

Thompson Historical Society

PO Box 47
 Thompson, CT 06277



Preserving Thompson, Connecticut's History Since 1968