



# The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter



Summer 2020

PO Box 47, Thompson CT 06277



(THS Owned Sign)

only possible for Lafayette to visit the inn during his 1824/25 tour. Knowing this, we have searched high and low and cannot find any positive evidence that Lafayette ever stepped foot in the inn. Of significant importance, Ellen Larned was silent on this topic and Ellen was rarely silent on such exciting topics.



(Newer sign believed to be from Armand LaMontagne)

run his hotel in Thompson. Given the popularity of Lafayette at that time, it certainly would have been a great marketing tool to attract patrons to the inn. Or, could Stiles

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## Lafayette in Thompson

Did the Marquis de Lafayette stop in Thompson? We have local writers saying he visited the Vernon Stiles Inn on Thompson Hill and other writers saying he stopped at the Jacobs Tavern and at a brook near the Ross property in East Thompson, but no known sources outside of these writings can confirm either. Evidence indicates the building that became the Vernon Stiles Inn was built in 1814 and Vernon Stiles purchased it in 1831. Numerous sources state that Lafayette was in America in 1777-79, 1780-81, 1784 and

1824/25. Based on the 1814 inn build date, it was

Written accounts of Lafayette's travels during his tour indicate that in 1824 he traveled along the coast of Connecticut, through Jewett City, Plainfield to Providence and on to Boston. On his return to New York, he traveled through Worcester, Charlton, Sturbridge then to Stafford Springs and to Hartford. In 1825, the final leg of his tour took him from Albany to Boston, following a course through southern Massachusetts. One possible theory is that Vernon Stiles, when living in Millbury MA, may have seen Lafayette in Worcester and brought

the sign, or the idea of the sign, with him when in 1831 came to



(Vernon Stiles Sign now at the CT Historical Society)

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### Father, Son Coast Guard Lensmen

Coast Guard Chief Photographer's Mate Thomas L. Lonergan, right, with his son, Photographer's Mate 2c James L. Lonergan, look at Coast Guard photo display in Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. Son made action shots on Balikpapan and Borneo, while father photographed doings on Saipan.

(U. S. Coast Guard Photo)

(Lonergans married into the Welch family of Wilsonville. Courtesy of the Welch Estate— donated by family of Mary (Collins).



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



Folks, this photograph is of Josh Butts, at the Thompson Transfer Station, Josh will live forever in Thompson history of the great COVID-19 pandemic.

I won't repeat here all of the many things I have heard since mid-March from those debating every medical, state and federal decision. Every one is entitled to his/her wrong opinion. For me, I accept whatever comes from this. My bags are packed and I am ready to go. I follow CDC recommendations and 'keep my head down'. I hope my friends, family and all of you are safe. I am told we have some months to go before we can all come out on the other side of this pandemic. Can you believe months? Months!?

What a strange period to live through! Confined to quarters for weeks with immediate family, trying to keep Grandma and Grandpa safe. Listening to news reports about empty shelves at stores. Our most vital concern is the state of our national toilet paper reserve. Burned into my mind is the image of my wife prepping for the shopping battle with the gloves, mask, sanitizer and shopping bags hoping to find something - pasta and all meat was all sold out for example.

By the time you read this, I am sure this situation will have improved but maybe not if the second wave does hit as predicted. If there is a second wave, I think we will be better prepared. This is not only a medical catastrophe but a financial one, of a scale unanticipated by anyone. No one's crystal ball can tell us if it is the right thing or not reopening the restaurants, gyms and schools in the near future.

How unpredictable our world is right now.

Now, imagine this is how we feel with our 24/7 news channels, social media, and the internet. We are choking on the information and opinions. So much speculation. Consider what it must have been like when the 1918 Spanish Flu came to America on the returning troop ships after WWI. In October 1918 alone, 195,000 Americans died. Globally, over 20 million perished during that 2 year pandemic and some researchers believe the number was actually over 50 million dead. That was an age when doctors didn't have the technical tools or understanding to cope with that flu. And that..... was just 100 years ago.

Here is my opinion. We are darn lucky to be living now with our ability to communicate, share best practices, have the best scientists and doctors and our essential industries working away to get us through this thing. If we had to have this pandemic, I am glad the outcome isn't the same as 100 years ago. Some of us didn't dodge the flu bullet but a huge majority did and will. How lucky we are to be living now.



### Wilsonville Mill

Rumors about the sale of the Wilsonville Mill are true. The new owners, Anna Szeto and Joe Charpentier, have plans to replace the roof on the older mill and then restore it fully. That location on the French River is very scenic and we wish them great success in their endeavors. Between the William Mason House renovations, the Wilsonville Mill renovations and the upcoming plans for restoration work at the Congregational Church and the North Grosvenordale Mill, things have been really moving ahead on historic renovations in town.





## Thompson's Suffragettes Celebrate 100 Years of Voting Rights



100 years ago this year, women across the United States could finally vote. Freed male slaves had full voting rights by 1870, perhaps not in the most supportive situations depending on the state. At least twenty black men were elected to Congress by 1874. In contrast, the first woman elected to serve in Congress did so in 1917.

Thompson had ladies on both sides of the suffrage debate. There existed suffrage and anti-suffrage movements in Thompson in the years leading up to full suffrage rights being granted. Many women were against suffrage, claiming they were barely keeping up with the care of their homes and families as it was. Susan B. Anthony summed up the feelings of



those supporting the suffrage position..... 'there never will be complete equality until women themselves help to make laws and elect lawmakers'.

The COVID-19 virus stole the thunder somewhat of the effort by Thompson 'suffragettes' to celebrate the 100 year mark. We thank those who reminded us so recently of this great moment in women's history. See a modern Suffragettes photograph (holding their breath and briefly unmasked) taken at the East Thompson Cemetery at the gravestone of Erlunia Tourtellotte, the first woman elected to a town position, the school board, in Thompson.

### Who was Malvina Howe?

Malvina A. Howe, co-founder of Miss Howe and Miss Marot's School, Thompson, Conn., at what was the John Doane Estate on RT.21.

Ms. Howe: Educator; born in Salisbury, Conn.; daughter of Dyer Spencer and Jane (Ocaín) Howe; educated at Mt. Holyoke Seminary. In charge of the French department of Hartford Public High School, 1879-95; secretary of Conn. Association of Classical and High School Teachers, 1892-1904; teacher in Miss Porter's School, Farmington, 1895-1905; established with Miss Mary Louise Marot, at Dayton, Ohio, 1905. Mary Louise Marot was the daughter of Benjamin Marot and Helen Sowers. Marot graduated from the University of Chicago in 1894 and worked with the University Settlement while there. After graduation, she taught at Miss Porter's School for Girls in Farmington, CT. Marot opened her own school for girls in Dayton, Ohio with Malvina Howe, which operated from 1905-1913. Miss Howe and Miss Marot's boarding and



(1870-1942)

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### Celebrating a 100th Birthday in 1830 in Thompson

The celebration of the hundredth birthday of a venerable citizen named Melatiah Mason, of Thompson, Connecticut, took place on the 30th ultimo. A sermon was preached on the occasion, and a collection of 840 made for his benefit. He has been a member of the church for 70 years, was a mason by trade as well as by name; always worked hard, lived temperately, possessed an almost undisturbed cheerfulness and an equanimity of mind; and lives to see around him, 6 children, 53 grand-children, 150 great grand children and quite a number of great great grand children.

*Original Article from Newspaper: Boston Centinel*



Witkowski family. Back row, second from left, Aileen Witkowski

(Submitted by John Rice)



## Great Job! Thank You for Restoring the William H. Mason House



### An Excerpt from the 1908 Town Report

Your committee in looking over the past school year have found in some respects an eventful year. In the fall term the school house in district No 3 ( W. Thompson) was destroyed by fire but no time was lost. A room was fitted up in the Mechanicsville school building where school was kept during the winter term. Then the trustees of the Methodist church in West Thompson kindly offered the use of their basement and the school was held there during the spring term. In the mean time a special town meeting appropriated money for new school building and the Board of Selectmen and the town school committee appointed a building committee which Thomas Ryan E.H. Cortis and Oscar Munyan were chosen as a subcommittee. They have discharged

their duty to the entire satisfaction of the committee and today West Thompson has the best school house

### THS Holiday Gift Shop

The THS Gift Shop will not be open this year due to Covid19. This was a difficult but necessary decision.

Please watch our Facebook page in November as we may have a selection of items for sale online with pick up days and times.



## Pictures from the Past



(Trolley stopped, heading northbound at the Wilsonville Road Stop. Trolley service ended circa 1925. Dog has his ride ticket for the laughing conductor.)



(Google street view of 2020 Wilsonville Road looking west. Old trolley tracks on left, crossed over into what became the asphalt company. Wilsonville Cemetery is barely visible halfway up the hill on the right.)

(Cont'd from page 1)

have assumed Lafayette stopped at the inn based on earlier legends of Lafayette passing through Thompson?

We know of two other legends of Lafayette being in Thompson. One source, William Richard Cutter's *New England Families, Genealogical and Memorial: A Record of the Achievements of Her People in the Making of Commonwealths and the Founding of a Nation · Volume 4 - 1914*, states that he had stopped at the Jacobs Tavern in E. Thompson, leaving his Masonic apron which remained in the Jacobs family. The apron has not been located to date. The other source, the *Thompson Bicentennial Memory Book 1785-1985*, states he stopped for a drink of water at a brook that ran by the home which once belonged to Seth Ross. Jacobs Tavern was located on present day Raceway Golf Course and the home of Seth Ross is about 1.6 miles N.E. of Jacobs, just past Sand Dam Road, both on what was known as the Middle Post Road, later the Boston-Hartford Turnpike and present day East Thompson Road. The only account we can find, that possibly places Lafayette on this

## **What have you been doing during the COVID-19/pandemic quarantine?**

The Thompson Historical Society would like to know how you are all surviving during this COVID-19 pandemic.

We would like to have a visual and written record of what you have all been doing to get through this strange pandemic period.

We would love to hear from our youngest to our oldest residents. All you have to do is cut out a postcard shaped card. To the left on the card you can put a note as what you have been doing while at home. On the other side, create a visual rendering just like you would see on any post card. Get creative. You can use paint, crayons, markers, pencils, ink...use whatever you'd like.

We will treat these cards like any other historical document that we receive. The present happenings will be the future historical memories. We will catalog them and enter them into our database as a permanent record of Thompson's history. After they are cataloged, we will post a selection of them on our Facebook page. Here's what you do:

Draft a letter, card, memory, drawing, send a photograph and either email to [josephiamartino@gmail.com](mailto:josephiamartino@gmail.com) or send by snail mail to Thompson Historical Society, PO Box 47, Thompson, CT 06277

road near Thompson, is in William Andrew Emerson's *History of the town of Douglas Massachusetts, 1878*. This book states that Lafayette was supposed to have borrowed two horses while travelling from Boston to New York over the Boston-Hartford Turnpike or Middle Post Road. Unless detoured from Douglas for another purpose, continuing on the Middle Post Road would have been the most direct route to New York and he would have certainly passed by the Ross property and the Jacobs Tavern. An account in Nolan, J. Bennett's *Lafayette in America, Day by Day, 1934*, indicates Lafayette "demanded post horses" in October of 1778. Although there is no location listed for this occurrence, it happened while he traveled from Boston to Philadelphia and may be the same noted occurrence in Douglas. While it is very

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*(North Grosvenordale schoolhouse on School Street, looking southwest across the Duhamel pond from Main St & Floral Avenue area.)*



*(Wilsonville scene, the mill is just visible at the far left. House on the hill on the left was known as the Keegan family residence, the mill owner. Wilsonville Rd. is in the foreground and Rt. 12 is in the distance. The barns shown at the right are no longer standing. The bridge shown, new in this photo, is believed to be the bridge built after the 1938 flood washed the old one away and this bridge is still standing as of 2020.)*



(Cont'd from page 5)

possible the Jacobs Tavern and Seth Ross legends are true, we are of the opinion that Lafayette never stepped foot in the building that became the Vernon Stiles Inn. If anyone has convincing evidence otherwise, or information of any other visits/stops in Thompson, please come forward, otherwise the Vernon Stiles Inn sign with Lafayette's depiction was just a great advertising piece and not connected to any actual Thompson event as was once claimed.

### Items You May Not Have Known

It appears that Mr. Daniel Baird Wesson, famous for his Smith and Wesson gun company, fled from his future in-laws across the Massachusetts state line to wed his sweetheart Cynthia Hawes in good ole Thompson. Thompson's famous minister Dr. Dow performed the service on May 26, 1847. Apparently the bridegroom's book of love letters has survived. Smith & Wesson historian Roy Jinks has his hands on the love letters if anyone is interested.

### Do You Have a Question?

Contact us on Facebook or send us an Email

*We recently received this question request from John B. Beck:*

**Q.** Did the Marquis de Lafayette visit the Vernon Stiles Inn?

**A.** The answer to this question is quite lengthy and there are some unanswered questions. On page one you will see Mark Snay's article regarding this question.

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 508-847-9092. Thank you.

### Windham County Transcript

4 Aug. 1910

*Thompson column*

The town has voted to improve the highway from Brandy Hill to the Massachusetts state line, and the gateway at the East Thompson Cemetery has been accepted by the town. It is the gift of the I. J. Hoyle estate.

### Archivist Corner By: Mark Snay

While we feel that cataloging the many generous donations to the THS are essential to recording Thompson's history, that did not fall under the "essential" guidelines of the state during the COVID-19 shut down, effectively shutting us down for several months along with the rest of the world. That did not stop us completely with several volunteers working from home and continued to receive donations. Progress continues at a slower pace and we are finally getting back to full speed. Calendars continue to be divided by image and will be available again, for free, when we are allowed to place in public. Many anomalies that have occurred during cataloging are now 100% cleaned up. We also learned that the Vernon Stiles Inn sign background is not what we originally thought (hinted at in this issue and more to come in a future article). Of the many donations, one from the estate of Mary DeParasis consisted of many glass plate photo negatives that we believe are original negatives of some of George Pompeo's well know photographs. There are more of these negatives that recently went missing and we'll continue to search for this important collection. We've also received a large volume of photograph's and documents of the Welch/Byrnes farm on Wilsonville Road. Thank you to all for your generosity. Now, if only we can find a photo of the Jacobs Tavern....

### Thank You!

A big thank you to Charlie Panu, Sue Vincent, John Rice and Paul Provost for caring for our facilities.

(Cont'd from page 3)

day school for girls; boarding school moved to Thompson, Conn in 1913. School closed during WWII period. Translator: Reclus' La terre 3. vol d'oiseau; Planat's Encyclopedie d' Architecture, etc. Member -New England Ass'n of Colleges and Preparatory Schools, Modern Language Ass'n of America. We believe the main building of the former Howe-Marot School burned in December 1954. **NOTE:** We seek a photo of Miss Howe who died in 1915.

## 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](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)



## Museum Hours

Typically Open  
 Sundays 9:00 a.m.—Noon  
 Call Joe before you come  
 (603) 657-6205

## Officers and Contact Information:

Joseph Iamartino - President  
 Mark Snay - Vice President (pro tempore),  
 Secretary, Senior 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  
 Jon Brynga - Director  
 Roberta Baublitz - Director  
 Lisa Berg - Director  
 Charlie Obert - Director  
 William Steglitz - Director  
 David Laabs - Director  
 Paul Provost—Director  
 Mark Savolis—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

## Thompson Historical Society

PO Box 47  
 Thompson, CT 06277



***Preserving Thompson, Connecticut's History Since 1968***