



The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

www.thompsonhistorical.org

Fall 2002

Calendar of Events

Planned membership meetings or Events for the Society. All are welcome!

Monday, September 16, 2002

- A performance by "The Victorian Lady" - Kandie Curle, 7 PM, at the Thompson Library in North Grosvenordale

Wednesday, September 25, 2002

- 100th Anniversary of the Thompson Library; Open house & tours of new library starting at 10 AM; History of the Thompson Library presentation at 7 PM by Ron Tillen; at Thompson Public Library, North Grosvenordale

- Open house and tours of the Ellen Larned Memorial Building, 2-6 PM, Rt. 193, Thompson Hill

Thursday, October 3, 2002

- Presentation for the THS membership on the history of the Ellen Larned Memorial Building, 7 PM, at Old Town Hall

Thursday, November 7, 2002

- The Story of the Tourtellotte School 7 PM, at Old Town Hall

Saturday, December 7, 2002

- Christmas Concert, 7 PM, Old Town Hall

The following dates are for Board of Director meetings, to be held at the Ellen Larned Memorial Building at 7 PM (unless otherwise stated).

Thursday, September 19, 2002

Thursday, November 21, 2002

Thursday, January 16, 2003

Thursday, March 20, 2003

Thursday, April 17, 2003

Please note these meetings are for directors only. Members may attend to present issues or ideas by arrangement. Call Dave Babbitt @ 935-5196

Museum Shop

- Come see the new items for sale in our museum shop at the Old Town Hall. We will be open from 10 am—2 pm on the following dates:

- Saturday, Sept. 7th

- Saturday, Oct. 5th & 12th

- Saturday/Sunday, Nov. 2nd

- Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 7/9*

- Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 14/15*

- Saturday/Sunday, Dec. 21/22*

(* open until 4 pm these days)

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Officers / Contact Info:

President: Dave Babbitt
 Vice President: Joe Iamartino
 Treasurer: Jeffrey Barske
 Secretary: John Lengel
 Curator: Mark Savolis
 Collections: Hattie Green
 Photos: Alice Biesiadecki
 Museum Shop: Beth Greene, Sue Vincent, Lucille Barrette, Henrietta Panu, Helen Flood, Val Iamartino
 Website: Barbara Loy
 Museum Coordinator: Barbara Weaver

Visit our website at:

www.thompsonhistorical.org
 or call us at 860-923-3200

Membership Information

More than 80% of our members paid their memberships on time this year, a significant improvement over last year. Thank you!

For those who have forgotten to renew, please do so. If you aren't sure if you have renewed, call Joe at 860 923 3776 and he'll let you know. We'd like to hear feedback and suggestions for the newsletter too. Give us a call!

Membership dues are:

\$10.00 Individual Membership

\$15.00 Family Membership

\$25.00 Contributing Membership

\$5.00 Student Membership

- Dues to be paid by July 1, 2002 for 2002-2003 year

- 1st reminder: Summer newsletter

- 2nd reminder: Fall newsletter



St. Joseph's School & Convent after 1938 storm

The school building sat next to St. Joseph's Church, where the parking area is today. Notice Valade's Hardware Store (originally the Coman Block) across the street with the double porch façade. The Valade family lived on the 2nd floor and the basement served as the Valade Funeral Home. Photo donated by Anna Naum.

Walking Weekend in Thompson—October 12

The Heritage Corridor's Walking Weekend has dozens of walks throughout our region. The Thompson Historical Society is sponsoring two walks on October 12

The North Grosvenordale Mill Village Memory Walk will be led by THS President & village native Dave Babbitt. The walk will begin at the Lions Bandstand at 10:30 am on October 12 and run about 2 hours.

Visit the West Thompson Lake to see & hear Alice Biesiadecki, a longtime director of the Society, and the Army Corps of Engineers present recollections & photos of the old village that succumbed to the West Thompson Dam Project in 1963. Tour starts at 9 am at the Dam Garage.

Wanted! Interesting stories or photographs for newsletter. Call 860 923 3776

The President's Quill by A. David Babbitt

As President of the Thompson Historical Society, may I extend a sincere welcome to you as we begin our 2002—2003 year.

We continue our chartered responsibilities to promote Thompson's history. We plan to offer a variety of programs throughout the Fall featuring the 100th Anniversary of the Thompson Library (the original building now serves as our depository and museum) & the Tourtellotte Memorial School story. We are playing a major role in Walking Weekend by sponsoring 2 walks within Thompson, one in North Grosvenordale & the other in the old village of West Thompson.

The annual Christmas Concert will happen on the first Saturday in December.

Spring will bring celebrations on the Common in April and our May meeting will feature recollections of how May Day (May 1) was celebrated.

I remember the May baskets for our teachers. Amazingly, they were surprised every May 1 throughout my elementary school career. As students, I think the party was the main idea. Our mothers would bake and we'd play games and enjoy the refreshments. Hopefully, you'll share your thoughts and we'll have an enjoyable evening looking back, when!

We plan to have a huge Yard Sale in May. We look forward to seeing everyone's "treasures". We are planning

other historical programs for the Spring, including a replay of excerpts from the movie made in Thompson, "The Man in the Net".

Overall, the Society is in good shape. However, there are concerns. We continue to have roof problems at the Ellen Larned Memorial Building. The water problems at the Old Town Hall continue, though we have a plan to rectify. A host of little annoyances continue in our buildings and challenge us. Anyone interested in helping us maintain these buildings is asked to step forward.

I once again congratulate the Museum Shop Committee on their fine efforts. The Shop continues to add much to the lore of Thompson and helps us financially as well. The Shop is open the first Saturday of the month and Sundays too during the Winter holiday period. See you in October.....

Pictorial History Book Publisher Selected— Time to Place Your Orders

The pictorial history book about the Villages of Thompson is moving ahead now that a publisher has been selected. The Donning Company Publishers, noted for the "Mills & Meadows" pictorial history book of Northeastern Connecticut, has agreed to supply the Society a 192 page heirloom quality book with hundreds of photos, in both soft cover and hard cover versions.

The soft cover version will sell for \$35.00 for Society members and \$40 for non-members and a hard copy version will be approximately \$60 per copy. Gold embossed lettering and leather covers are available at additional cost for the hard cover

book. The book's layout will be completed this winter and we expect to see the books by early Summer 2003. All profits will benefit the Society.

The due date for last minute photos or stories to contribute is October 1st. We especially need photos of the old Main Street area of North Grosvenordale and anything from Quinebaug and Fabyan. Please call 860 923 3776.

The section editors for the book are:

- Peg Babbitt / Betty LeClair for Quinebaug and Fabyan
- Hattie Green / Sue Vincent for Thompson Hill / Quadic

- Dave Babbitt for the Grosvenordales
- Barbara Weaver for East Thompson & Wilsonville
- Alice Biesiadecki for West Thompson & Mechanicsville

The book will have a first run of 750 copies & is available on a first come, first served basis. Call early for an order confirmation number!

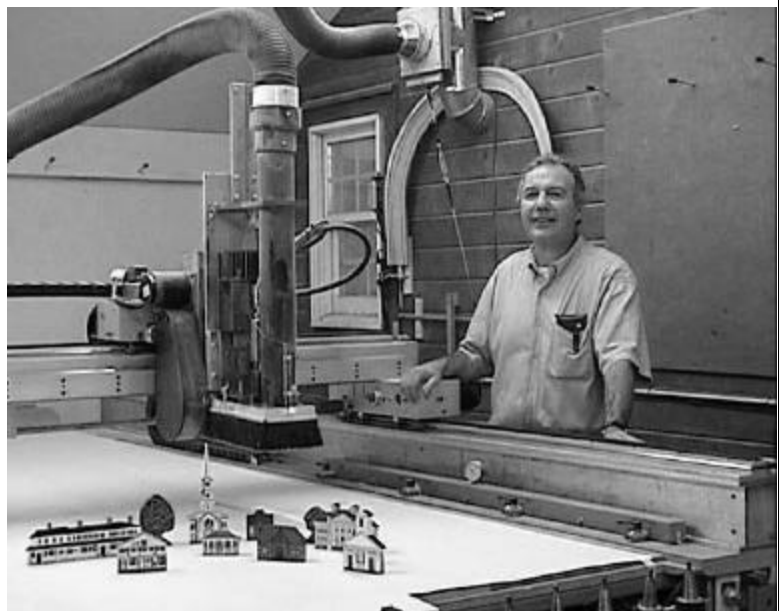
To reserve your copy of the book, contact Valentine Iamartino at 860-923-3776 and specify the hard or soft cover version. You will receive an invoice later this year. No payment is needed now to reserve books.

Society Contributor—Bernie Davis

Behind-the-scenes contributors to the Society volunteer their unique talents and efforts. One volunteer, Bernie Davis, the woodworker behind the Thompson wooden building series, has contributed his artistic and industrial talents to us for 11 years.

The idea for the buildings originated in 1992 with Lucille Barrette. Society member Lucille & husband Ben, owners of a specialty lumber business, have donated the wood for the buildings for many years. Bernie turns them into art in his Grosvenordale shop. Each building is hand-painted, in the early years by Society volunteers and now by local artist Charlotte Trahan.

Bernie is recognized around the world as a master craftsman of curved moldings. His donation of time, equipment and expertise demonstrates one of the most important ways to help the Society. Because of his generosity, we can offer residents and visitors



Bernie Davis with a collection of the wooden buildings he has cut for the unique Thompson buildings collection.

unique handmade decorative gifts reflecting the character and history of Thompson.

We encourage you to visit our Museum Shop and see the Thompson Buildings for sale. The 2002 building is the No. Grosvenordale Hose House, a fire-house that sat across from the Mill but is now gone.



Maplehurst Farm, 1790.

Maplehurst Farm in Wilsonville

This photo, taken about 1911, shows the old Tourtellotte family homestead, dated to 1790. The homestead is located across the street from the Tourtellotte cemetery. Wilsonville Rd. is visible on the right and Lowell Davis Rd is in the foreground. The triangle has been paved over.



Mystery Photo

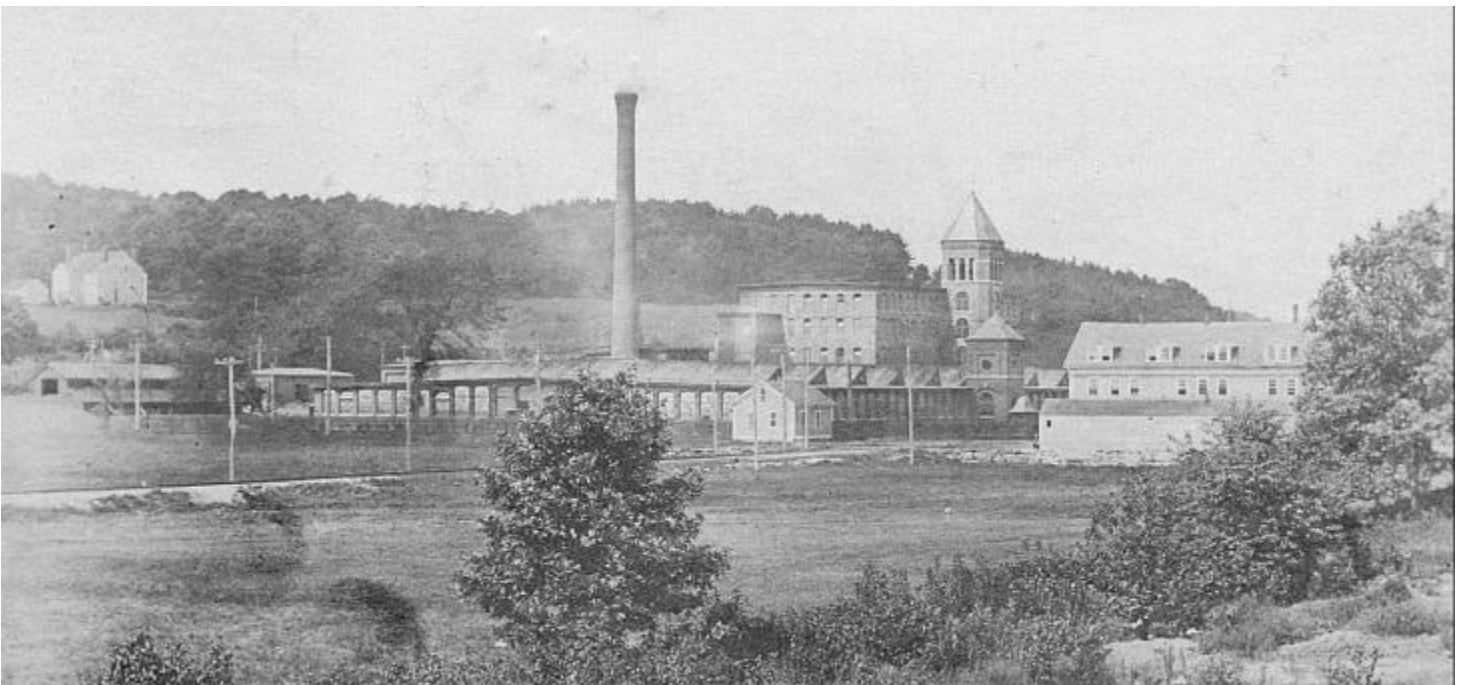
The person on the left wearing a hat was a well known Thompson resident, selectman and business person. Who is he and why is he at the Putnam train station with these unidentified young Thompson men? Take a guess & call 923-3776 with your answer.

We are looking for the **oldest photos & drawings** of Thompson for the Winter Newsletter. Check your shoeboxes.



Water problem at Old Town Hall almost solved

The Old Town Hall water problems are almost a thing of the past, thanks to the Tanson family. Wayne and Christine Tanson recently had a new well put in at their home, located next door to the Old Town Hall on the Thompson Common. The Tansons have agreed to share the well with the Society. Charlie & Mike Trudeau of C.R. Trudeau & Sons Plumbing & Heating will be asked to do the job as their grandfather Rosario "Red" and father Charles R. Trudeau were called before them (see Red and Charles Sr. in the photo above). Photo supplied by Denise Vogel.



Nostalgic View of the Grosvenor-Dale Mill . This photograph of the No. 1 Mill & the house on hill was taken circa 1906. Note the trolley tracks running through the site of the old ballfield. Photo courtesy of Harriet Tourtellotte Collection.

The Thompson Historical
Society

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www.thompsonhistorical.org

Society News

Our thanks to Lou Lane for his painting work at the Old Town Hall.

Sue Vincent is leading the charge on the Society's Yard Sale in May. If it is anything like her wonderful cookout last June, it will be spectacular. If you have items to donate, please call Sue at 923 5728. She'll arrange transport & storage for the items so you can clean out now.

At the Ellen Larned Memorial, Gerry Beaupre is helping in many ways & working with Beth Greene on the new sign. Hattie Greene is making excellent progress in Collections, helped by grand-daughters Heather & Alyssa Kress & volunteers Ron Tillen & Gail Leveille. Peter & Jane Vercelli are working with the Barnard Company, a premier architectural roofing company, to fix the roof. Barbara Weaver is working on the museum plans. Landscaping in progress too.....action everywhere.



Buck Hill Schoolhouse—c1900 with Charlie Whiting at door and perhaps Bill and Laura Logee nearby. Note waterpump to the left. Charlie Whiting left many photos & a generous legacy for the Society at his passing.

Ask the Society— Questions on Thompson History

Q. Where were the schools on Thompson Hill in the 1800s?

A. There were at least three. There was a small school house that sat on Rt. 193 south of the William Chandler house, the yellow home currently owned by the Williams family. That little school would be on Marianapolis property if it was still standing today. There is a legend that the new school was built on Chase Rd. because Mr. Chandler was tired of hearing the children screaming and foolin' at recess right next door to him. The first building was small and not dissimilar to the Buck Hill school house shown below. The next Thompson Hill school was the building now owned by the Masonic Organization, closed when Thompson regional schools were consolidated. Another school building is the Academy, the still-existent brick building (now nicely restored) next to and just south of the Thompson Congregational Church. The Academy story will have to be told another day.

Q. What is a corduroy road?

A. In olden times, dirt roads commonly had deep ruts making passage difficult, especially for horses or oxen hauling wagons. When any path became heavily traveled, complaints about road conditions escalated. Town officials would often encourage investors to build an "improved" toll road or convince residents to pitch in & widen the path into a new road in front of their property. Sometimes, the construction of parts of the road would be in "corduroy" fashion, meaning the road would be covered with boards or logs set side by side, across the roadway. This was especially true when the road passed through areas that were perpetually muddy. The logs would be often times covered with a layer of dirt & stone but reports indicate it still wasn't smooth.

Q. Did General (& President) U.S. Grant live in Thompson?

A. No, but he visited Thompson on July 4, 1870 following a reception at the Bowen House in Woodstock. His motorcade passed through town & he left from the Thompson Hill train station. We've had 2 native Generals in our past, Gen. Davis, who saved the Washington Monument & Gen. John Tourtellotte, brother of the school benefactor.