



# The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

www.thompsonhistorical.org

Summer 2002

## Calendar of Events

### Monday, June 10, 2002 (New Date!)

- Annual meeting & picnic at Greystone Farm, the home of Rob and Sue Vincent on County Home Rd (Rt. 21). See the wonderfully- restored Ramsdell barn re-erected on the property. Sue will be giving tours of the home and barn throughout the evening.

- Please R.S.V.P. if you will be attending so we can plan for food. Do you have a special dish or dessert you would like to bring? Contact Sue Vincent at 923-5728.

- Antique Roadshow— Kevin Gaudreau and Camille & Frank Strong will appraise your personal items. A \$2.00 appraisal fee will benefit the Society. Please bring a chair to relax in and an item or two for our experts to appraise for you.

### Upcoming Meetings:

Board of Directors and Membership meeting dates for the new year will be announced in August. The Fall newsletter will list these dates.

### Museum Shop

- Come see the 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 June 1, July 6, August 3, and September 7**

## Membership Information

Membership dues are:

- \$10 Individual Membership
- \$15 Family Membership
- \$25+ Contributing Membership
- \$5 Student Membership

- Dues to be paid by July 1st
- Please send dues to: *Membership Dir.*

*Thompson Historical Society*  
PO Box 47, Thompson, CT 06277

## The President's Quill

by A. David Babbitt

The close of our fiscal year is quickly coming upon us. The final program for the year 2001-2002 will be the annual meeting on June 10th, 6:30 PM at Greystone Farm. At this meeting, it will be my pleasure to offer you the President's Report for our 2001-2002 year. I am hopeful that we will have excellent attendance for this meeting and I look forward to greeting you.

A lot has happened over the year & there is still much to be accomplished. There are several areas where one could volunteer and I urge you to do so. Our Museum, The Ellen Larned Memorial, under the guidance of Hatti Greene, continues to make progress. The Museum Planning Committee, Collections & Building/Grounds Committees are very active and could use volunteers.

Our newsletter continues to draw praise. We could use assistance in a variety of ways—contributing writers, distribution, folding etc.. would all be welcome. Volunteers, content suggestions and constructive criticism are always welcome (923 3776).

Helen Flood (923-9946) needs volunteers to work the Museum Shop. Ken Goloski would be thrilled to have help caring for the Old Town Hall. We offer 4 quality programs to our membership each year. Please contact me with program ideas for the coming year. They are much appreciated.

These are just a few ways a member can help. I urge you to get involved. Let's all help provide insight into Thompson's past and promote Thompson's future.

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## Officers / Contact Info:

President: Dave Babbitt  
Vice President: Joe Iamartino  
Treasurer: Jeffrey Barske  
Secretary: Jane Vercelli  
Curator: Mark Savolis  
Collections: Hattie Greene  
Photos: Alice Biesiadecki  
Website: Barbara Loy  
Nomination Committee Chairperson: Barbara Weaver

For information, visit our website at:  
www.thompsonhistorical.org  
Or call 860-923-3200

## The Ream Estate at 100



The Ream Mansion as it looked circa 1912

### Norman Bruce Ream - a short history

Norman was born in Pennsylvania into a farm family. He fought in the Civil War. After the war, he took up store operations and became well-known for his business relations with Mr. Armour, the pork king.

Mr. Ream soon established himself as an astute commodities trader in Chicago. Investments in banking, real estate, railroads and shipping made Norman wealthy.

As the Gilded Age evolved, Norman traveled frequently to New York City, the financial hub of America. He made New York City his second home.

A close friend of his, John W. Doane, invited Norman to visit his home in Thompson, CT. During the 1890s, the Reams visited the Doane home several times. Norman decided to build a new home in Thompson, and he spared no expense in doing so. The home was completed around 1902 and Mr. Ream enjoyed his estate for his remaining years.

### The End of the Mansion—1964

The Marian Fathers took over the property in the early 1930s and created a school on the lush campus. Despite economic hardships, two wars and multiple devastating storms, the Mansion survived as the center of the school campus.

In early 1964, a fire broke out and consumed the mansion. A Marian brother died as a result of smoke inhalation. The Marians built a new building, now the heart of the Marianapolis School campus, on the site of the old Ream Mansion.



The mansion had a two lane bowling alley in the basement.



LEFT: The estate required a team of groundskeepers to maintain the cultivated gardens, vast expanses of lawn, greenhouses, arbors and 7 miles of roadway.

BOTTOM: Norman B. Ream's paneled billiards room was the most impressive room in the mansion according to one Marian Father who remembers it.

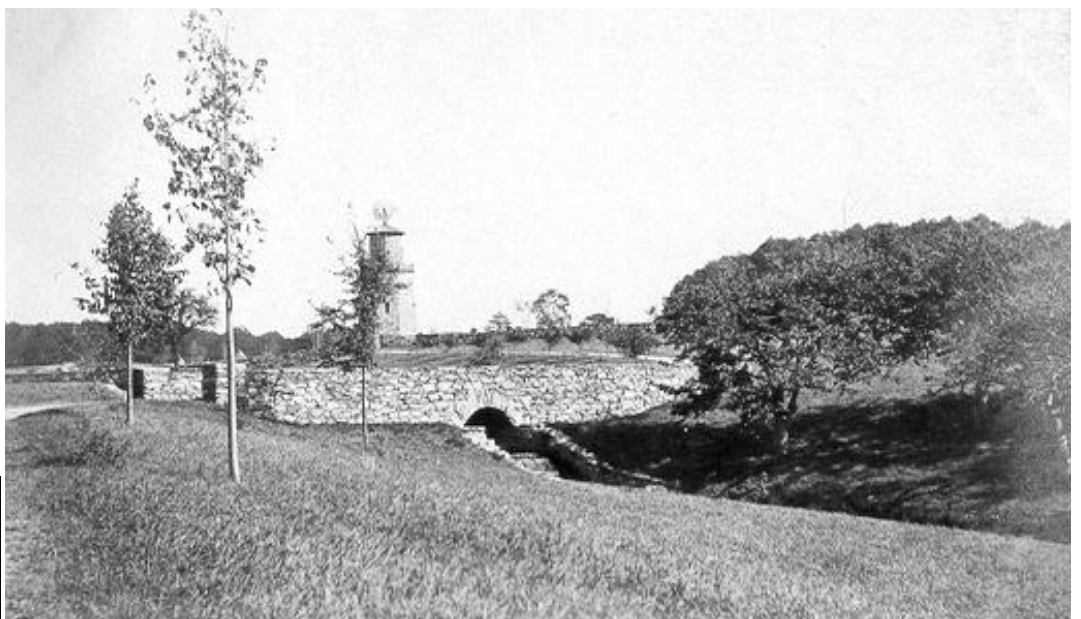




Many of the photos of the Ream estate were contributed by Marie Kitchen, a great-granddaughter of Mr. & Mrs. N. B. Ream.



ABOVE: Norman B. Ream, as he looked circa 1905.



Ream's golf course (now the Quinnetisett Country Club) can be seen with a water-tower perched on a massive stone pier. The windmill spinning on top of the water-tower is barely visible. Ream imported masons from Italy to build stone walls, bridges, culverts and foundations. Many still stand today in excellent condition.



**David Babbitt welcomes National Honor Society members to the Thompson Historical Society**

On Thursday evening, May 16th, Dave Babbitt met with the new National Honor Society members from Tourtellotte School and awarded each a year’s membership in the Thompson Historical Society. Dave discussed the Tourtellotte legacy as the inductees visited the Tourtellotte Memorial Room. He wished each well and hoped that they would remember their Thompson roots and hometown.



**David Babbitt, THS President, presents membership to Chris Tierney, TMHS National Honor Society President.**

The newest Society members are:

- Kyrstyna Kozakowski
- Kristi Langevin
- Alison Laventure
- James Lincoln
- Vinnie McSweeney
- Benjamin Monahan
- Greta Pearson
- Pamela Santerre
- A. J. Stafford
- Jessica Succi
- Paul Szyrka
- Amy Benoit
- Sean Cassidy
- Andrew Consiglio
- Erin Davitt
- Eric Guillot
- Matthew Herman
- William Herra
- Calvin Knight
- Aaron Siekierski
- Chris Tierney

**SPRING 2002 Question:**

Why was the village of New Boston renamed “Fabyan” and where does the name come from?

**SPRING 2002 Mystery Answer:**

According to Jane Johnson, photograph P/4390 could be the barn that sits near the intersection of O’Leary Road and Brandy Hill Road.



**Quinebaug Train Station**

Our Quinebaug photo detective, Betty LeClair, located this gem of a photo—a rare shot of the train depot in Quinebaug.

Our thoughts go out to Betty this month. She recently lost her husband who passed away after being stricken at home.

**The Thompson Historical  
Society  
P.O. Box 47  
Thompson, CT 06277**

Phone: 860 923 3200  
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### ***Call for uniforms***

Each year, around Memorial Day, the thought has come that we should be preserving and displaying the uniforms of Thompson's men and women who have served in the armed services. We have a few items from WW II and the Korean War in our collection but we are always open to new additions. What better way to save that old uniform than to deposit it with the Society to help enhance a future Memorial Day or Veteran's Day display.

### **Society News**

The Society has many projects that shall come to fruition throughout the summer months....

- We will complete the installation of a new well at the Old Town Hall. This will provide us with our first running water in the building in several years. It will help with the "necessities of life" as the saying goes....
- The front of the Old Town Hall will receive a new coat of paint, courtesy of Louis Lane. He hopes to have the project completed by late July or early August. He will scrape, spot-prime and finish-coat the front of the structure. This should help preserve and beautify this wonderful 1842 reminder of our past, and our functioning auditorium and museum shop.
- A new sign for the Ellen Larned Memorial has been created by Beth Greene. The sign, a new lamppost and lighting will be installed over the summer. Beth Greene, Sue Vincent and Gerry Beaupre are the committee overseeing this project.
- Gerry Beaupre will re-establish the new front lawn at the Larned Memorial. He hopes to marry his lawn with that of the Memorial and may they remain united forever.....and looks as great as Gerry's present lawn does.
- A dehumidifier will be up and running in the basement of the Larned Memorial by the time you read this newsletter. This will help in the on-going battle against mold and dampness facing our main depository for our ever-increasing collection.

### ***Ask the Society— Questions on Thompson History***

**Q. Did Mrs. J. F. Tourtellotte, the driving force behind the creation of the Tourtellotte Memorial High School, live in Thompson?**

A. Harriet Arnold was born in 1837 not far from the Fabyan/Woodstock line. She was the daughter of William Arnold, the overseer of the stores and farms of the Mason & Grosvenor family mills. She met her future husband Jacob Francis Tourtellotte at Nichols Academy. After Dr. Tourtellotte graduated from Columbia, he left his wife in NYC while he served as a ship's surgeon during the Civil War. Leaving the service due to poor health, the Tourtellotte's moved to Minnesota where they made their fortune in real estate. After their two daughters died young, Mrs. Tourtellotte devoted herself to charitable projects. The Tourtellotte Memorial High School is the result of the Tourtellotte's generosity. Construction began in 1907 and upon completion, the school was one of the nation's most modern.

After her husband died in 1912, Mrs. Tourtellotte moved from Minnesota to live in North Grosvenordale. While still possessing tremendous wealth, she sold her mansion in Minnesota and moved into a modest home on Main Street, North Grosvenordale, today known as the TEEG building. When Harriet died in 1919, she left her Main Street home for use by the school system as the residence of the senior school administrator.

**Q. Did Thompson have ice houses? If so, where were they located.**

A. Thompson had at least 3. One was at the pond called "Big Dam" on Marcy Lane. Another was on the mill pond in North Grosvenordale located near the new parking lot/landing behind the K of C. Dave Babbitt remembers that in the 30s and 40s, people used to warm up in the ice house shed after skating. There was also 1 or 2 icehouses near West Thompson village. Photos anyone?