



# The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

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

**August 2006**

## Calendar of Events

### Walking Weekend Mill Walk—October 7, 2006

Led by Dave Babbitt, Thompson First Selectman and former President of the Thompson Historical Society, this easy two hour adult stroll through North Grosvenordale will review how life was in the historic mill village, considered one of the best preserved in New England. The tour will visit the 1872 Grosvenor-Dale Company Mill and the mill housing of Three Rows, Greek Village, and Swede Village. Dave's first hand account of life in the mill town on the old French River is not to be missed! Visitors should meet at the Lions Bandstand directly off Riverside Drive (Rte. 12), across from the Thompson Town Hall in North Grosvenordale. The tour begins at 10 am.

The highly successful Walking Weekend, now in its 16th year, is promoted throughout the 35 towns of the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor. There are dozens of different tours running the weekends of October 6-9 and October 13-15. Enjoy the changing of leaves and wonders right here in our own backyard. For more information, visit [www.thelastgreenvalley.org](http://www.thelastgreenvalley.org).

### New Museum Exhibit Opens on Walking Weekend—October 7, 2006

The Thompson Historical Society Museum at the Ellen Larned Memorial Building will be open Saturday, October 7, 2006.

The new exhibit features information on the Ten Villages of Thompson and family heirlooms and clothing from five generations of the Ballard-Dalton-Chase family from Chase Road. The Museum will be open 10 am to 4 pm. It will also be open the first Saturday in November and in December, 10 am to 2 pm and by appointment.

There will also be a tour of Thompson Hill on October 7th that will begin at the 1842 Old Town Hall, today the Society's Museum Shop and will end at the 1902 Ellen Larned Building, the home of the Society's Museum. This leisurely, 1 1/2 hour walk around Thompson Hill will cover the

the Thompson Common, the old turnpikes, the early village, the two Society buildings and other historical topics. The walk starts at 2 pm and will be led by Joe Iamartino. Call 860 923 3776 for information on the walk or the museum.

### Museum Gift Shop

*Our museum shop at the Old Town Hall will be open the following dates/times:*

Saturday, Oct. 7, 2006, 10—3:30pm

Saturday, November 4, 2006, 10—2pm

Sat. & Sunday, Nov. 18-19, 10-4 pm

Fri—Sun, Nov. 24-26, 10-4 pm

Sat/Sun. Dec. 2-3, 9-10, 16-17, 10-4 pm

Sat. Dec. 24, 10-1 pm

### Board of Director Meetings (Community Center, 7 pm)

2006: Sept. 25, Oct. 30, Nov. 28  
2007: Jan. 29, Mar. 5, April 23, May 29  
Annual Meeting—June 18, 2007  
Location to be announced

## Membership Information

**July 1, 2006—June 30, 2007 year**

### Membership dues are:

\$10.00 Individual Membership

\$15.00 Family Membership

\$25.00 Contributing Membership

\$5.00 Student Membership (to age 18)

\$5.00 Gift Membership

Dues to be paid by July 1, 2006. Send to:

THS, PO Box 47, Thompson, CT 06277

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### Officers / Contact Info

President: Joe Iamartino

Vice President: Sue Vincent

Treasurer: Lynne Lengel

Secretary: Ruth Barks

Curator: Mark Savolis

Photos: Alice Biesiadecki

Museum Shop: Lucille Barrette, Helen Flood, Carol Holewa, Val Iamartino, Henrietta Panu, Jane Provost, June Schoppe, Sue Vincent, Sandra Warner

Website: Blair Cole

Society Administrator: Blair Cole

[www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)  
or call us at 860-923-3200



### The President's Quill by Joe Iamartino

As I write this, the 1862 Mill in Grosvenordale is approaching its end. Many probably feel the way I do.....sad to see the old building destroyed, mad that 'we' couldn't find a modern use for the building, glad to see an eyesore removed. Let's hope the next use of that historic site will be a blessing for our town.

How does a community determine what aspects of our town should be preserved? What buildings should be saved? Do we inhibit our town's potential by worrying too much about keeping things the same or should we worry more?

As the town's historical society, I believe one of our roles is to help the town planners answer those questions above. I hope the planners consider these suggestions:

- 1) Aim for distinctive open-land village centers for each of Thompson's 10 Villages; some exist and need to be enhanced, others need to be created.
- 2) Establish clear and consistent signage rules that enhance the appearance & historic appeal of the villages
- 3) Enact *local* review rules that protect sites with historic, prehistoric & scenic value, especially the dwindling open spaces.
- 4) Encourage historic & recreational tourism for an economic driver:
  - use of our parks, lakes, rivers and trails for hiking, camping, swimming, canoeing, biking, horseback riding, bird-watching, sailing, fishing, sporting activities; museums
  - Consider low stress uses of our valuable riverfront locations: More walkways, small restaurants, historic signage, walking/ biking trails between the village centers, riverfronts, parks and recreational areas.

Opinions welcome on this topic .....

### Administrator's Corner by Blair Cole

Robert Frost, in his famous poem, 'The Road Not Taken' writes:

*"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I - I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference."*

A few years ago I drove my youngest daughter to Vermont to visit Bennington College. That morning, after leaving her with a friend at the school, and making arrangements to pick her up in the evening, I found myself at a fork in the road. Which way to go? Find a shopping mall for the afternoon? Sit in a restaurant and read the paper? I chose the path less traveled by, one that meandered through Old Bennington, Hemmings Motor News Museum, Bennington Battle Monument, Bennington Museum, and finally past Robert Frost's grave in Old Bennington Cemetery. It became a fulfilling day, and I went away feeling like Bennington, VT was an old friend. Only later did it occur to me that at each place I was greeted by people who had volunteered their time to act as docents, tour guides and hosts.

The same is true of our Quiet Corner of Connecticut. We can follow the crowd to our Walmarts, McDonalds, casinos, beaches, etc. We also have a road less traveled, one which meanders through the historical riches of Thompson; the Old Town Hall, the Ellen Larned Museum, the Thompson Common, Walking Weekends and much more. A relative few graciously volunteer their time year after year to keep our history alive. When you see a fresh coat of paint on the Old Town Hall, it was done by volunteers. Flowers in the vases on the steps of the ELM, again, volunteers. The restoration of the ELM and the exhibits therein, completed entirely by volunteers. The Docents at the Ellen Larned Museum and the Old Town Hall who greet our visitors and illuminate our history for them, all volunteers.

I invite all of you who have not yet volunteered, to contact the Society to find out how you can help. Many volunteer opportunities exist; the staffing of our facilities, grounds maintenance & beautification, painting, museum exhibition installation and management of our collection. I am certain that you who have yet to volunteer, should you choose that road less traveled by, will find that made all the difference.

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**Notes:** The 1772 Foundation has awarded the Thompson Historical Society a generous \$8000 grant to continue the repairs at the Old Town Hall. Ken Goloski, a Society member, will be restoring the windows on the east side of the building starting this Fall. Work on the pillars & bases is being bid out now. For more information about the 1772 Foundation, visit [www.1772foundation.org](http://www.1772foundation.org). We are very grateful for their support.

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We recently asked for help identifying the ladies shown in a Kings Daughters Hall photo. Through Jane Johnson, Jessie Hughes advised that they are (L-R) in the back row: Mary Eddy, Jessie Hughes, Phyllis Baker, Dorothy Benson. In the front row: Carrie Robbins, Mary Smith, Rose Munyan, Annie Benson, and her daughter, Mary Benson. Mary Fatsi also called and confirmed some of the names too. Thank you!

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Sally White asked that I mention the origin of the article on the displaced Nichols House. It was Jack Frost's article #332 for his Boston Herald column "Fancy This".

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Thanks to Barbara Weaver for her fine work as our Treasurer and to John Lengel for years as our Secretary. Lynne Lengel has taken on the treasurer's duties and Ruth Barks is our new Secretary. We thank Mercedes Robbins for auditing our books.

**Recent Donations:** From Maine, an 1856 Ramsdell Orchards catalog. From Florida, Mr. Case donated Alice Ramsdell's copy of the Windham County Railroad History by Gregg Turner & Alice Ramsdell. David Cassells sent family photos & info on his Child & Upham ancestors. Johnney Larned sent us his Larned Family book, "Though Silent They Speak", available from [xlibris.com](http://xlibris.com). John DeBerardinis donated the post-office slots from an old post-office at the Vernon Stiles Inn. Gerry Beaupre gave us a Quaddick Rd. photo. Space doesn't permit me to thank everyone here, but you all have our thanks!



## Echoes of Old Thompson—Volume II

Orders for our upcoming book, Echoes of Old Thompson Volume II, are being taken now. The limited edition book is being readied by Donning Publishers for late November 2006 delivery and is available in two styles; a soft-cover version or a leather-bound book with protective box. Donning Publishers specializes in heirloom quality books featuring long-lasting stitched spines and archival, acid-free pages. Volume II will have a color photo section in addition to over 200 black & white photographs. All proceeds benefit the Thompson Historical Society.

Topics or chapters in the book include: The complete Thompson & Putnam text from Richard Bayles 1889 'History of Windham County'; A new chapter on Major Robert Thompson; The Mysterious Lithic Structures in Thompson; Ithiel Town & John Tourtellotte—Two Famous Thompson Architects; Emma Shaw Colcloeugh & Erlunia Ross Stories; The rare 1833 Lester Map showing Thompson at its maximum extent before Putnam was formed with mill, school locations; A map of West Thompson properties showing the locations of homes & businesses before they were removed for the flood control project in the 1960s; Personal Interviews with: Donald Hoenig, Henry Bernard, Clarence Ballard, Minnie Reynolds, Adrienne Coderre, David Rawson & others; A very interesting newspaper article from the late 1800s describing Thompson in the 1850s; The Stories of Francis Fitzgibbons; The Letters of Eva (Kelley) Huntington .....and more.....

To order, send a check or money order to: The Thompson Historical Society, Echoes Volume II, PO Box 47, Thompson, CT 06277. Please include your name, address, telephone number and/or email address and please specify the quantity and style of the books requested. The THS member price is \$48 for the soft-cover and \$68 for the hardcover. Non-members, the price is \$53 for the soft cover and \$73 for the hard cover. To have a book shipped media mail, include \$4.75 (Continental US only). For those local to Thompson, we will contact you by mail, email or phone when the books arrive to arrange pickup. Please note the following: Book orders postmarked by September 30, 2006 are guaranteed to be filled. After that date, orders will be filled on a first come, first served basis.

PLEASE NOTE: If you purchased Echoes of Old Thompson Volume I, please visit our website [www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org) to download a list of additions/corrections to that book. Readers found errors or identified people/places that we did not know. Please put the errata / update sheet in the book for future readers. We are trying to be as thorough in our research as possible.

## Windmills in Thompson

Doug Williams, Burt Rhodes, Al Landry and I were discussing recently the possibility of using windmill to power a house in Thompson. Doug mentioned that the Williams' carriage house on Thompson Hill has a moveable windmill cap. In the past, Thompson had a significant number of windmills. These are just some of the known locations:

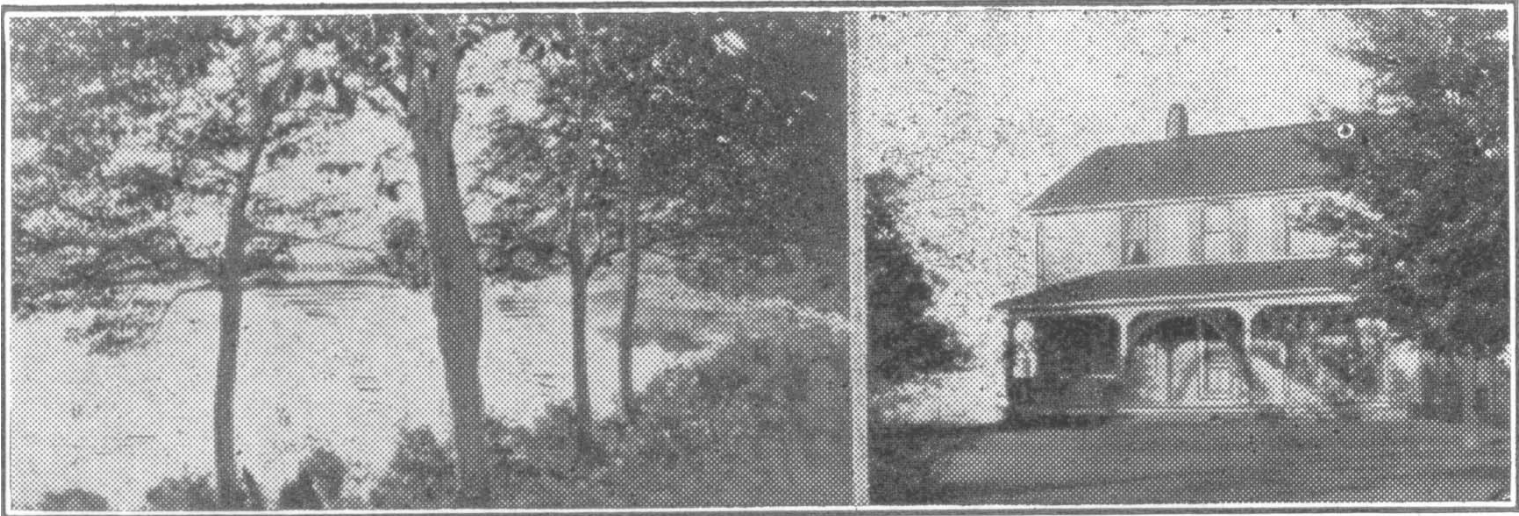
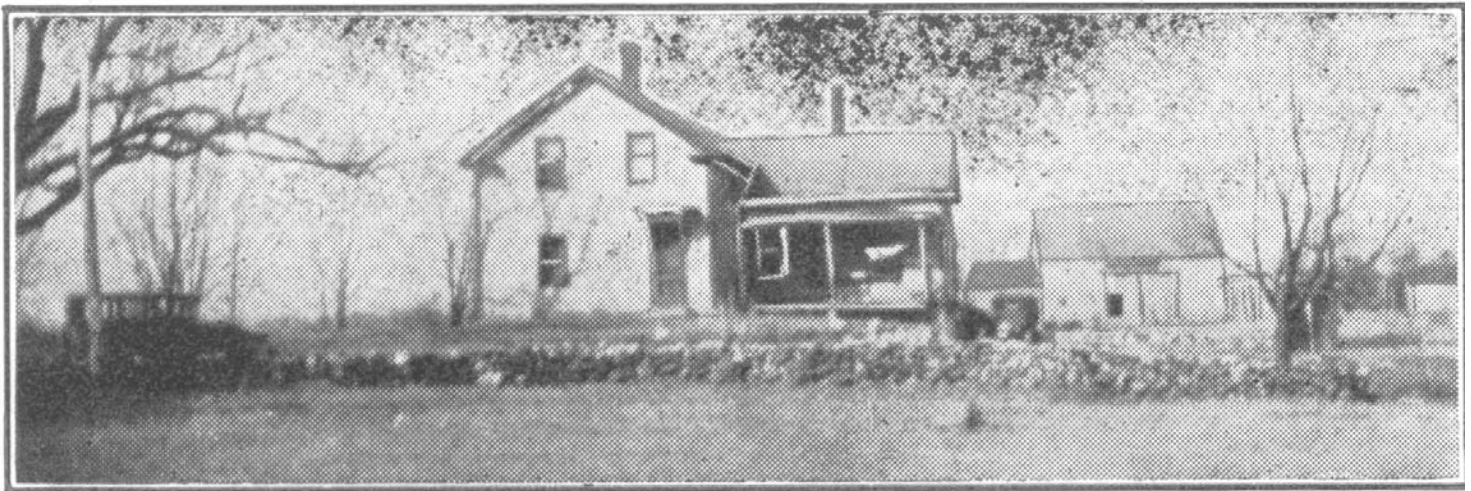
- Quinattisset Golf Course (on the watertank seen at right, c1910)
- Vernon Stiles Inn
- Thornfield Hall
- Elliot Carriage Shop (Buckley Hill)
- Central Square (No. Grosvenordale)

There were large watertanks in other locations in town that were outfitted for windmill use but I can't prove they were used without more evidence. More photos or locations on this topic are sought. The windmills in town were popular starting in the early 1900s and did not last long.

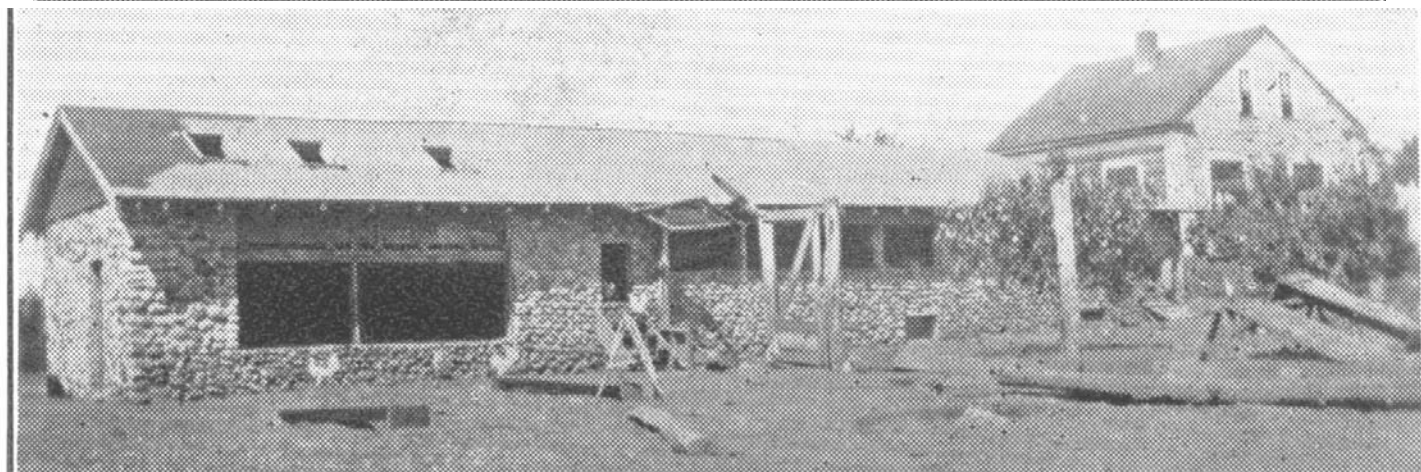
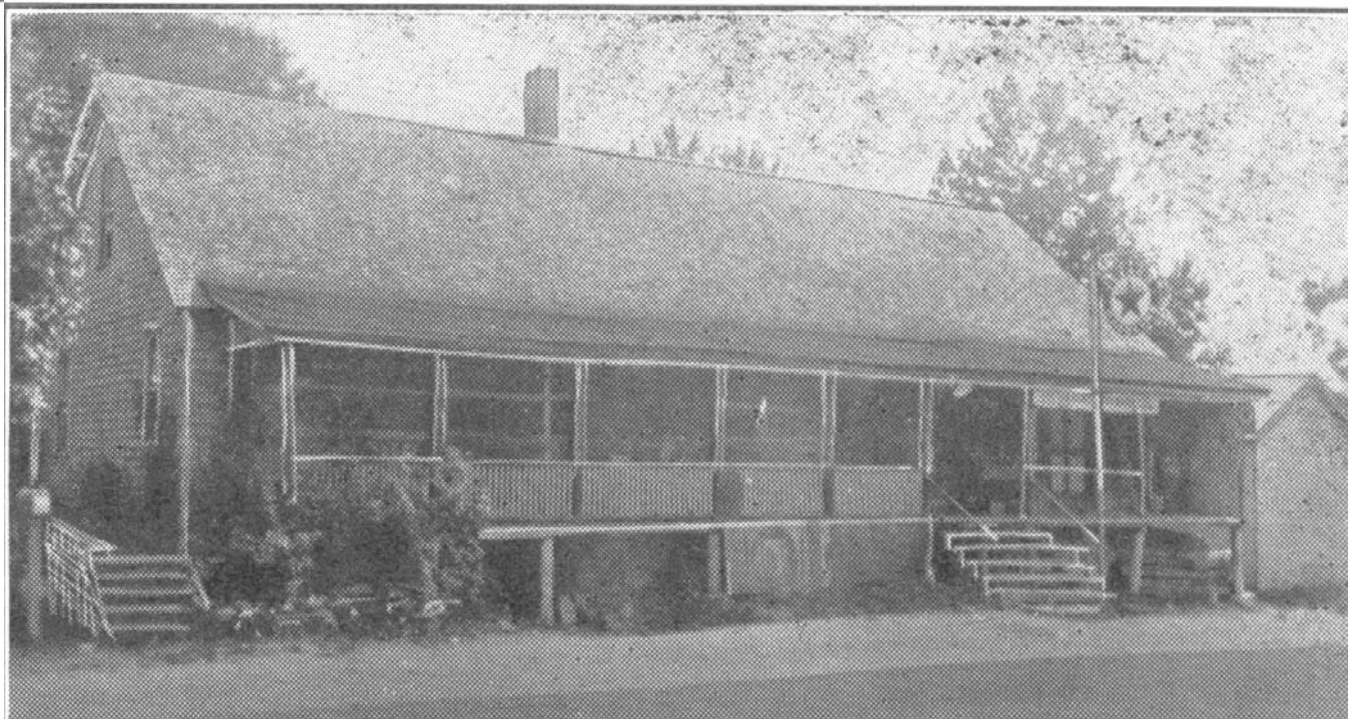
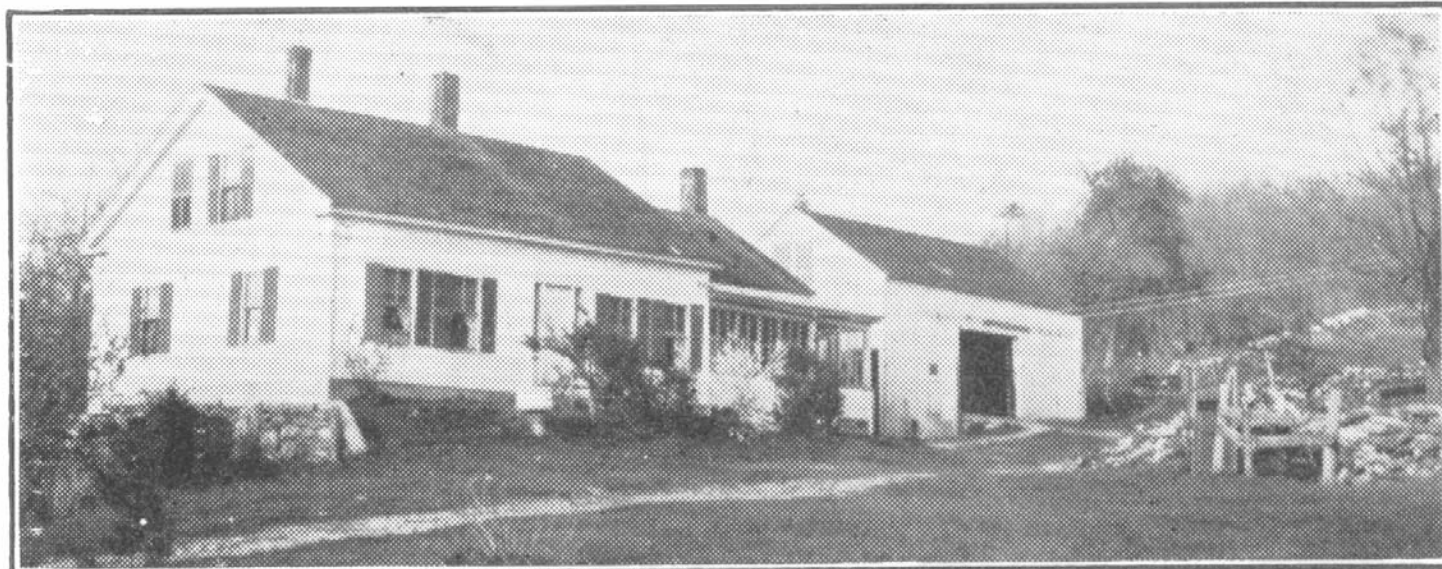


### More notes:

- Ron Tillen reports that the Thompson Fire Engine Company will celebrate its 175th anniversary on July 4, 2007 and a celebration is planned. It was the first fire company to be formed in Windham County. Visit their new website too: [www.thompsonhillfire.org](http://www.thompsonhillfire.org)
- The June 7th Greek Village Reunion was a great success despite a monster rainstorm. More than 100 came to the event held at the Colonial Club. Jim Sali, a THS board member, was one of the chief organizers. Pandely Gity's baseball story was a highlight of the day.
- Another mystery solved by Charlie Seney. A donor sent a charred piece of wood from a Dec. 1896 No. Gros. fire. Charlie found a note in the Windham County Standard confirming a Dec. 26, 1896 fire at the Chandler & Paradis Block, the main shopping district in the village. We knew there was a fire but had no date/details. Thanks Charlie.
- Good websites: Visit the website [www.iconn.org](http://www.iconn.org). This website is Connecticut's digital library. With just a library card number, you have access to HeritageQuest and Connecticut History On-Line, two great resources. Check out [www.connecticutbarns.org](http://www.connecticutbarns.org) too.....



**Mystery!** Copper engraving blocks were found in an cigar box. Robert Trogman, a friend in California, has spent his life working with the old methods of printing. He printed the engravings for us, shown on pages 4 and 5. The only information we have from the engraved blocks are the words 'Thompson, Conn.' Help us identify please..... It is possible that the photographs are reversed due to the engraving process.





## Ask The Society

**Q.** What is the factory at Mount Hunger?

**A.** This is the disparaging nickname of the original textile mill founded in what is now North Grosvenordale. After William Fisher acquired the shares of the Thompson Manufacturing Company, the village was called Fisherville. The 1828 Fisherville Mill was built of stone to prevent fires in the dusty cotton mill environment. The mill was taken down around 1897 to make way for expansion of the Grosvenor-Dale Company facility. The photograph on page 7 taken about 1890 shows the old 1825 mill dwarfed by the 1872 mill that replaced it. The stone mill was the one called Mount Hunger.

**Q.** What year did the New York, New Haven & Hartford train accident in North Grosvenordale take place?

**A.** Thanks to Wally Brodeur & Charlie Seney for the photographs. It appears that the accident near the train station off Buckley Hill was in 1913. In the top photograph, the mill in the background remains the same today which helps us locate the wreck site. Note the weavedshed that replaced the old stone mill in 1897 (see page 7). In the middle and bottom photographs, the No. Grosvenordale train station is the dark, long building in the background.

**Q.** What is the Sharples Store and where was it located?

**A.** It was a small convenience store and gas station in Wilsonville. In March 1964, the owner Thurman Sharples Sr. was murdered during a robbery. The Acts II Ministries building stands today on the former store site. Sharples was an uncle to Barbara Pickett who answered this question for us. She reports that her uncle sold fireworks on the MA / CT state line when fireworks were not available in Massachusetts.



Sharples Store—Rt. 12 Wilsonville—1964



*Thompson.*—1. NATHAN RAWSON was born at Thompson October 4, 1821, and is a descendant of Edward Rawson, who settled in New England in 1636, and who held the Secretaryship of the Massachusetts Colony from 1650 to 1686. He has been a Justice for fifteen years, and an Assessor for six. His business is farming. He was originally a Whig, having been bred in that party, and has been a supporter of the Republican party from its inception. Like all fat men, he is superbly good natured; stands six feet in height and weighs 250 pounds. His usual business is farming.



Nathan Rawson

**The Rawson farm in North Grosvenordale. Note the "Like all fat men" line. That's a gem. The house still stands on Buckley Hill.**



### The Archives & Other Work To Be Done

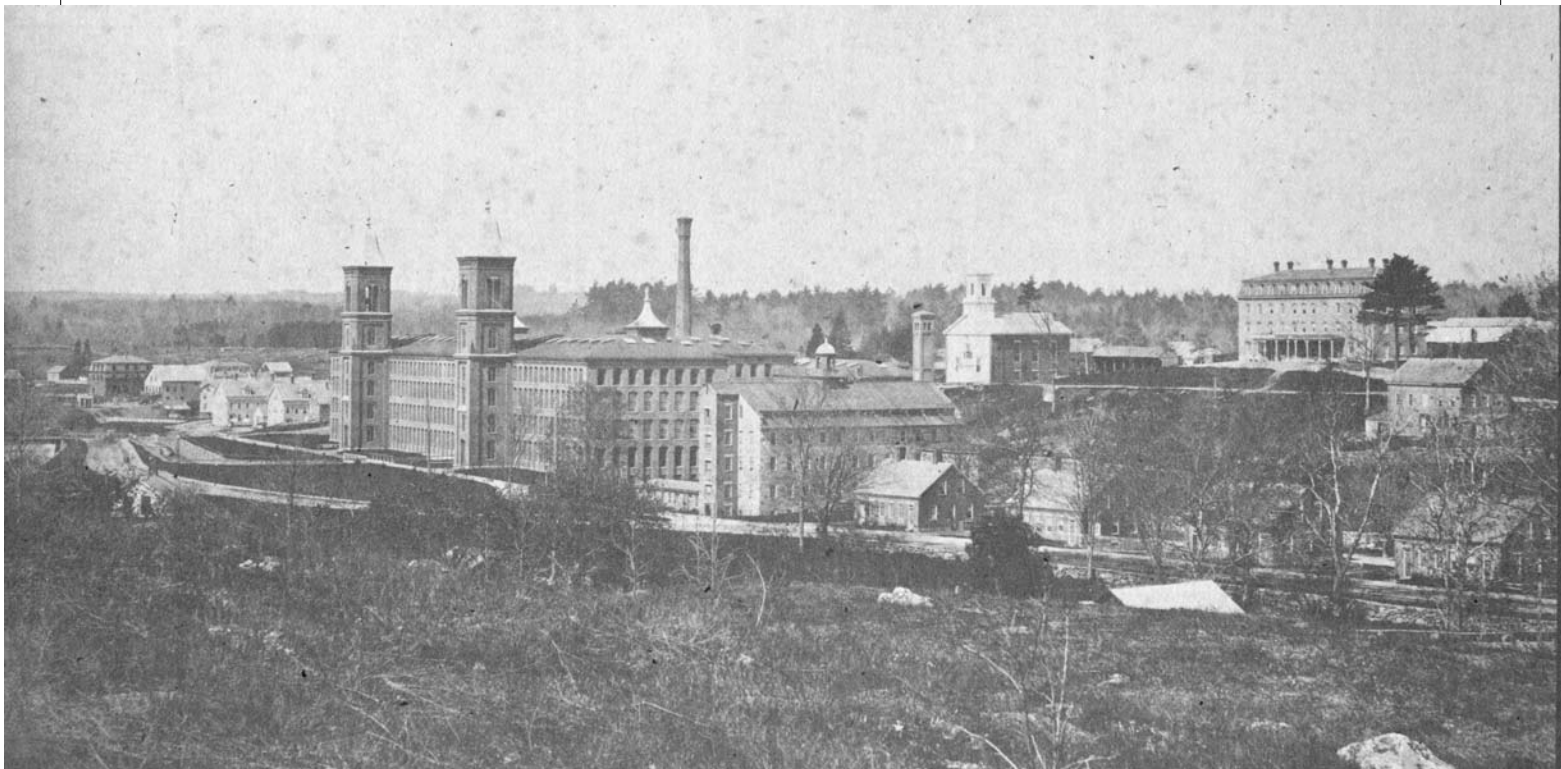
With the museum reopening in October, all effort this year will be directed to the archiving of our collection. Cataloguing is a slow process, requiring attention to detail and respect for the fragile state of many of the artifacts. We ask your patience as we focus our efforts this year on completing this difficult task.

As Blair Cole mentioned, we have plenty of volunteer tasks open. Some of the work we need help with:

- Managing an MS Excel members database
- Helping us enter our collection in the Past-Perfect Museum software
- Photographers, esp. for before vs after shots
- Newsletter editor
- Writers (articles especially)
- Carpentry, Plumbing, Electrical & Painting
- Artists (Painting or Digital Graphic Artists)
- Those with sewing ability to make Spires of Thompson pillows for the museum shop

We know that your time is limited. Those with special talents can make a huge difference. Even two or three hours a year can help us staff our museum shop.....call 860-923-3776

The old Fisherville Mill is dwarfed by the Grosvenor-Dale Company mill. The small stone mill was taken down to make room for weave sheds.



## Quarterly Newsletter

The Thompson Historical Society  
P.O. Box 47  
Thompson, CT 06277  
[www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)

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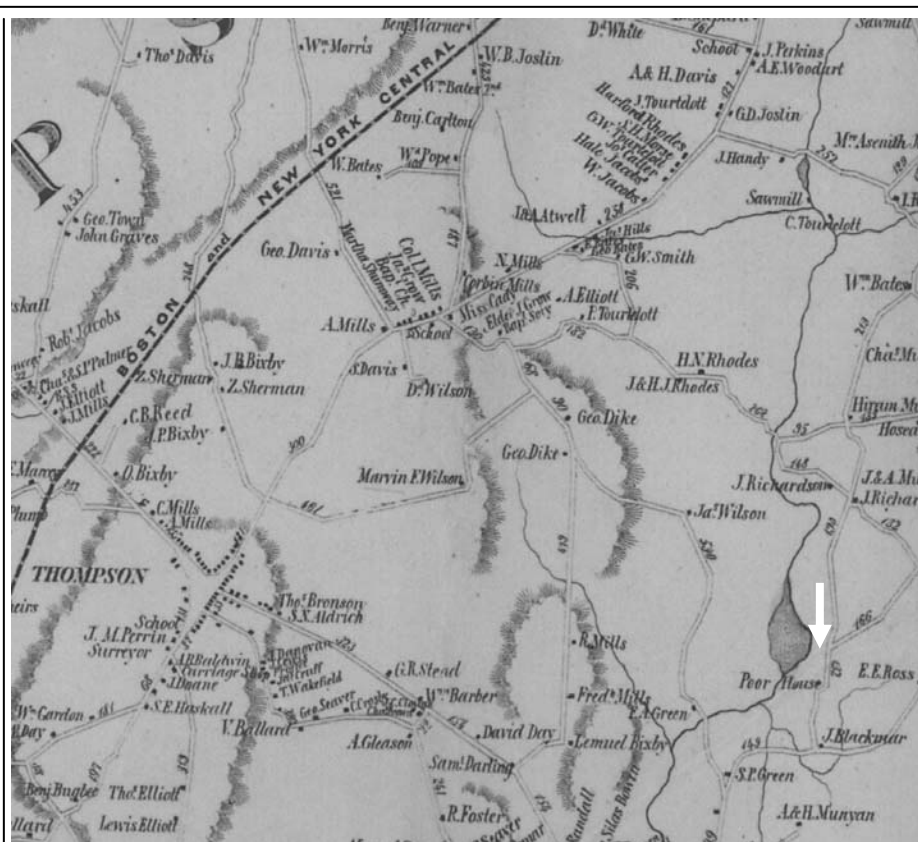
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### Whiting & Spooner:

We recently received \$1100 from the Charlie Whiting estate towards the Society's operating expenses. Annually, trustees of Charlie Whiting's estate disburse the proceeds from investments Whiting left to different organizations, of which we are one. We are very grateful for his generosity.

We also received news that Putnam's Earl Spooner, a noted collector of regional history, has passed away. Mr. Spooner in life made his photograph collection available to us for use in our calendars, books and newsletters. He left the Society a bequest in his will.

Thank you for thinking of us, Earl.



**Question:** Where was the last Poor House in town? **Answer:** Also known as the Town Farm, it was located on the shore of a pond that became a part of Quaddick Lake when the dam was raised (see arrow). This image is from the 1856 Woodford Map of Windham County available on the UCONN Maps & Graphics website. Some amazing historical maps of Thompson & the Connecticut region are available at <http://magic.lib.uconn.edu>.