

Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

We're on the web! Visit us at: www.thompsonhistorical.org

April 2013

2013/2014 Board of Directors Meetings:
June 11, 2013 Annual Meeting, 6 pm dinner / 7 pm meeting. Route 21, Greystone Farm, Thompson

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Society News



Annual Meeting

June 11, 2013

Please join us at the home of Rob and Sue Vincent, Route 21, Thompson, Greystone Farm. Picnic: 6 pm, Meeting 7 pm. RSVP Sue 860-923-5728 & to volunteer a dish. We thank the Vincents again for their generosity in hosting our Annual Meeting.

Membership/Dues Information:

July 2013-June 2014 Membership

Members can find their paid status on the address sticker of this newsletter. (Membership runs on the THS fiscal year; July 1-June 30.)

Thompson Historical Society

Attn: Membership

P.O. Box 47

Thompson, CT 06277

Contributing Membership: \$25.00

Individual Membership: \$10.00

Family Membership: \$15.00

Members are invited to purchase first-year memberships for new members for \$5.00.

From our friends at the TMHS Alumni Association -

Where will the cow plop? !

Cow Plop Event: Saturday, June 29th at Beausoleil Field at TMHS!
Pick a square. If the cow plops in your square, you win \$1,000! Cost: \$20 per square.

You do not have to attend the event to win, but if you want to come watch, everyone is welcome!

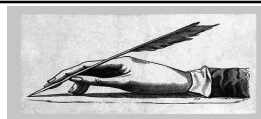
Proceeds from the event to benefit the Alumni Association TMHS Scholarship Fund and the TMHS Hall of Fame.

To purchase a ticket, please call Joe Lindley, 860-928-5527, or email joelindley119@hotmail.com or dspinelli@thompsonpublicschools.org.

Good Luck!

THS Contact info: jiamartino@charter.net—860.923.3776

President's Quill ~ Joe Iamartino



Friends,

In recent years, a number of interesting stories and books relating to Thompson history have been written. Joe Lindley's book on the Turteltotte brothers during the Civil War is particularly timely as we are celebrating (if that is the correct word) the 150th anniversary of that conflict. Joe's fine work on Thompson Civil War soldier Henry W. Brown will be soon released, further documenting the letters that are posted on our website.

Paul Ryscavage's extensive research on the life and accomplishments of Norman B. Ream is available on Amazon.com. His book, *Norman B. Ream: Forgotten Master of Markets*, is undoubtedly the best look we will have of the career of Ream, the financial wizard and creator of the estate that is today the Marianapolis School property.

The collaborator of the noted Ken Burns, Geoffrey Ward, released the story of his relative, the one time Lion of Wall Street, Ferdinand Ward, who took down his partner, former President U.S. Grant, in his embezzlement scheme. Ward's book, is called *A DISPOSITION TO BE RICH*.

How a Small-Town Pastor's Son Ruined an American President, Brought on a Wall Street Crash, and Made Himself the Best-Hated Man in the United States By Geoffrey C. Ward.

The reason why this is important to Thompson is that Ferdinand's son lived in Thompson while his father was in prison. The story of his kidnapping in Thompson by his father and the story behind it makes it a compelling read for those interested in old Thompson.

We have received a very generous donation from Britain. Professor Alan Thomson has delivered a long awaited story on the life of Major Robert Thompson. Our town was named after this noted personage but facts about his life have only recently been collected into a biography. The good professor has donated the story to our historical society and we will be turning it into a booklet available this fall.

Lastly, Mark Snay, Sue Vincent, and others have located a number of books online that related to our history. The 1874 Thompson Barn Burnings is one such example. Please visit our website to read about this odd situation when the alcohol debate grew violent in our town. Other book finds are listed on our website.

I encourage everyone to come forward who has a story to tell or knows of a book that helps us with explaining some element of Thompson history. Each is a gem in its own right. Whether or not these stories show our little town in a positive light or negative, they help us understand where we've been and perhaps can help guide us where we are going.

~Joe Iamartino

From the archives of the Killingly
Historical Society,
Windham County Transcript articles
from the past.
Supplied by our friend Marilyn Labbe

~25 May 1911~

George Deady, a farm hand employed in the town of Thompson, has not been seeing snakes, but he has seen a snake, had it in his hand, in fact. He thought he had found a horsewhip when he saw the snake's tail sticking out of the grass beside the road and picked it up. His snakeship-of the black kind and about five feet long-immediately coiled itself about Deady's arm to the latter's horror. With the hideous head with wide open mouth stuck within a few inches of his face the man's nerves gave way and with a shriek of terror he ran toward the team in which his companion, Henry Pearl, was sitting. Deady cried out to Pearl to pull the snake off his arm; but Pearl was not much of a snake charmer, either, and his reply was a yell, followed by a leap to the ground.

Cut off from all assistance, Deady collapsed and passed into an unconscious state.

The snake then gracefully disentangled itself from the arm and glided into the bush. It was several minutes before Deady came back to his senses.

Now he is advising his friends not to pick up any horsewhips.

Pepsi Cola® "Your Man in Service" Campaign ~ WWII

Walter Eddy's daughter, Martha, and son-in-law, Art Hoffman, now living in Louisville, KY, recently wrote to the THS and included an interesting link to a WWII recording. Here is their story:

We recently had the opportunity to play a 78 rpm recording from Walter to Julie back in 1944, per the postmark in North Grosvenordale. As you probably know the Eddy family lived on Sand Dam Road for many years.

*We've learned that many folks never knew about this Pepsi Cola **Your Man in Service** campaign to allow soldiers to communicate with family.*

It's possible that other Americans have this treasure tucked away somewhere in their home and have no idea how emotional it is to hear a loved one's voice again. Personally, we would love to know if there are any other citizens of Thompson who have one of these.

Be sure to click on the "show more" section so you can follow along with his greetings and get more details.

Follow this link to listen to Walter Eddy talking to Julie during WWII. The recording is less than two minutes long:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJrCJSe4q>



"The Voice of Your Man in Service" record was done courtesy of Pepsi-Cola around 1942 in an effort to allow the soldiers in World War II to communicate with their friends and family. In some cases the record was recorded in the studio in New York City but most often was done in mobile recording booths with equipment brought to where the soldiers were.

Anastase Vonsiatsky

**The Spy Who Loved Me (Then Went to Work for Hitler)
The story of Anastase Vonsiatsky, an unlikely spy in Thompson, Conn.**

You've probably heard the story of Nathan Hale – one of Connecticut's most famous spies. But in the 1930s, Connecticut was home to a lesser-known case of international espionage. As WNPR's Nina Earnest reports, a Russian immigrant in Thompson became the focus of an FBI investigation for spying on behalf of Germany. *(Article excerpt on next page.)*

January 3, 2013 Audio Recording:

<http://www.yourpublicmedia.org/content/wnpr/spy-who-loved-me-then-went-work-hitler>

The Spy Who Loved Me

Excerpt: The year was 1917. The Bolshhevik revolution was sweeping over imperial Russia. A young military cadet named Anastase Vonsiatsky left military school in St. Petersburg to fight the Reds. As he came from a family that had been loyal to the czar for years, the White Russian loathed the spread of Lenin's communist message. He then took part in the Russian Civil War.

Iamartino: He was shot at, he was wounded. And he somehow ended up in Istanbul.

Then how did he make his way to Thompson – a town of less than 10,000 in north-eastern CT? He goes from Istanbul to Paris, trying to make some money.

Iamartino: The story is he works in a can can parlor, pulling curtains...and he somehow comes to the eye of...Marion Ream Stephens.

Marion was a divorcée – a very wealthy divorcée. The heiress daughter of Gilded Age capitalist Norman B. Ream had signed up to be a nurse in France during World War I – maybe to save face from her unpleasant divorce. And she was 20 years older than Vonsiatsky.

Eventually, Marion returns to the United States and to Thompson...the young Russian joins her. The couple married in 1922. Five years later he would become a naturalized citizen of the United States.

...And later, during WWII a convicted spy for conspiring to help the Nazis. For the rest of the story, read the book *The Russian Fascists: Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925-1945* by John. J. Stephan. ISBN 0-06-014099-2.

Picture retrieved from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's website: <http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/history/famous-cases/vonsiatsky-espionage>



PRESIDENT'S NOTE:

The story of Anastase Vonsiatsky and his connection to Thompson is absolutely fascinating. While this WNPR excerpt and link to the audio recording (previous page) continues this story, there are some factual errors. For instance, the Floyd Lane in the recording is actually Floyd Cole, THS board member Blair Cole's father.

It is our hope to bring you more information on this interesting topic in the near future. ~Joe



The Talabacs and the Arrow Grill, courtesy of Larry Houle, Jr.

Our newsletter Editor queried her mother, Aileen Witkowski, on the subjects of this picture and relays the following:

"Talabac's was a grocery store where Famous Frank's is now, near Joseph's Hair Salon. Arrow Grill was a teen hangout run by John Kelly. He was married to Dolly Talabac. The Talabacs were also our neighbors on Red Bridge Road. We were hanging around the Arrow Grill all during my high school years... '49-'52."

Historical Treasure Returns to Thompson

On March 10, 2013, an irreplaceable collection of Civil War letters, written by Thompson's Henry Washington Brown, was generously donated to the Thompson Historical Society. Brown enlisted into the 21st Massachusetts Infantry Regiment on August 19, 1861 at Worcester, Massachusetts. In December of 1862, he left the infantry and reenlisted into the 1st U.S. Artillery. He fought in thirteen major Civil War battles, the most notable being Antietam, Chantilly, Roanoke Island and Frederiksberg.

Henry Washington Brown, the son of Benjamin and Mary Brown lived in the Brandy Hill area of Thompson, CT near the old Baptist Church. The small farm on which Henry lived was located on property now owned by the Laframboise Well Drilling Company.

"It is extremely rare to receive a gift of this nature," states Joe Iamartino, President of the Thompson Historical Society. "Part of the agreement we have with the Brown family is to make the letters available to all who wish to read them and use them as research. The depth of detail in these letters is exceptional."

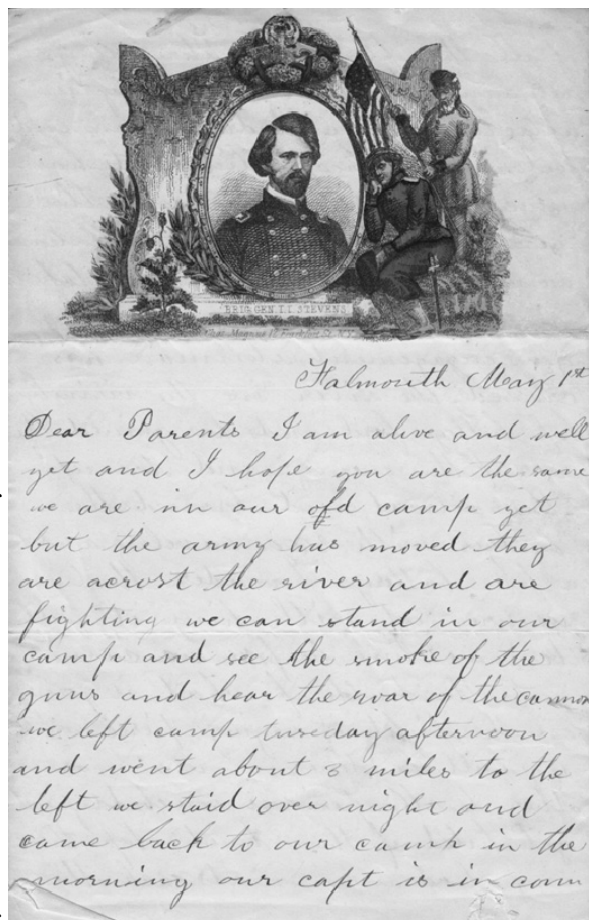
Joe Lindley, Director of the Historical Society and author of the book, *Thompson's Tourtellottes and the Civil War*, adds "It is such a wonderful opportunity to be able to preserve the individual stories of our soldiers."

According to the Thompson Historical Society, 252 Thompson men fought in the Civil War, 29 were killed or died of wounds, 30 were wounded, and 44 were captured. Several became generals, with one Thompson native, William Sully Beebe, receiving the Medal of Honor. Beloved town physician Dr. John McGregor gained national attention when he became one of the Civil War's first POWs by refusing to leave his wounded men at the Battle of 1st Bull Run.

Henry's letters are the gift of the Brown family. Brown's great-great nephews, John Proctor of Ivoryton, CT, and Henry Wile Brown of East Falmouth, MA, Proctor's first cousin, spent years safeguarding the letters and transcribing them. They were passed down from one generation to the next and are in remarkable condition. They will be the main topic of the up-coming book *1000 Days to Live, The Civil War Letters of Henry Washington Brown*, expected to be available from the Thompson Historical Society by the end of the summer.

Researchers believe that Henry contracted malaria in Virginia during the spring of 1864. He languished in Carver Hospital, Washington, D.C. and the Satterlee Hospital, Philadelphia, PA for several weeks before dying a painful death on May 19, 1864. The letters are well-written and allow the reader a personal glimpse of Henry's life. "The saddest of all the letters is the one from his mother dated May 10, 1864, when she finally realized her son was near death. It reads, 'My poor, poor boy. We just got a letter from you informing us that you are worse. I feel dreadful bad. It seems as though I must do something for you...' Mary Brown had just given birth to a daughter and was unable to visit her son. He died nine days later," says Lindley.

The transcribed version of the letters can be seen at Thompson Historical Society website at: www.thompsonhistorical.org/ under "collections."



A Henry Washington Brown letter dated May 1, 1863. Henry was then stationed in Falmouth, VA.

The Village Grocery

Volume 26 # 2**Webster Times****March 14, 1884****NEW BOSTON**

If Peck's "Grocery-man" could run the New Boston grocery, he would have more than one boy to catechize. The village grocery, since the collapse of the old time tavern, has monopolized the evening gatherings that must meet somewhere. For the most part these men have no definite purpose in punctually presenting themselves around the cozy stove at the usual hour, except perhaps to pass a social evening, and enjoy their pipe where they buy their tobacco.

The privilege is based on good logic, but has been ruled out in drug stores I believe. Just before elections politics are feebly discussed, afterwards items of a more comic nature, new stories exchanged; the relative merits of noted pugilists presented, in fact the topics are as varied as the tastes of the company, but the language is not always evangelical, nor the illustrations such as are used in the family circle, and we cannot conceive why some men will persist in bringing their boys with them night after night to absorb all this nonsense, a great deal of which is positive instruction in matters leading on to crime.

The effect of this is noticeable immediately on its subjects in the school or in the street, and their connection with other boys is almost equivalent to allowing them all to attend the original grocery meetings. They are the boys that will rub charcoal around their ears and exhibit it to their parents as the place where the school teacher kicked them if they happen to get punished in school. They are the boys that kill the neighbor's cats, stone the dogs, break windows, steal watermelons, fruit and old iron, chew tobacco like veterans, in short all the mischief done can be safely said to originate with or through them.

Perhaps nowhere is the effect so noticeable as at the school. Here they are a source of untold trouble; complaint of abuse made from other scholars, damage to furniture and buildings, trespass upon adjoining premises, and a general disregard of all rules seems characterize their attendance.

Q: Where is Elliott's Grove?

THS members Blair & Karen Cole were recently researching "Elliott's Grove" and came upon a Webster Times 1995 article written by Bernie Dupont stating in part:

The first (Ballard) reunion had been held on August 15, 1888 at Elliot Grove, then later Nichol's Grove, both in Thompson. The family settled on Roseland Park in 1928."

Anyone with knowledge of the actual location of the Grove is invited to contact Joe at jiamartino@charter.net.

ARTS ALIVE CONCERT

Date: Saturday, June 8, 2013

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Ryscavage Auditorium, 1909 Building

Tourtellotte Memorial High School

A concert with *fancy dessert reception* and *silent auction* for the benefit of the Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association Scholarship Fund.

Featuring the music of: George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Victor Herbert.

Tickets are \$20.00 and available at Johnston & Associates Real Estate Office, or Joe Lindley 860-923-5527.

The Paradis Family

Research courtesy of Mark Snay:

In the THS collection, we have a photo of Diane Paradis with her music class, I wanted to know more about her and the time frame/location of the photo. When I researched on Ancestry.com, I came across photos/genealogy posted by George Roch of Denver, CO. George is a great-grandson of Henri Paradis, Diane's father. I contacted George and we shared photos and info pertaining to his ancestors who lived in North Grosvenordale. The "sisters" and the "business with car" photos both came from George's posting on Ancestry and he was gracious to allow our use.



Henri Paradis had 15 children. Diane Paradis had a music school in the Paradis block. Dolenda (Paradis) Roch was married to Dr. Emilien Roch and they lived on Main Street just south of where Walker and Main meet. The house is still there.

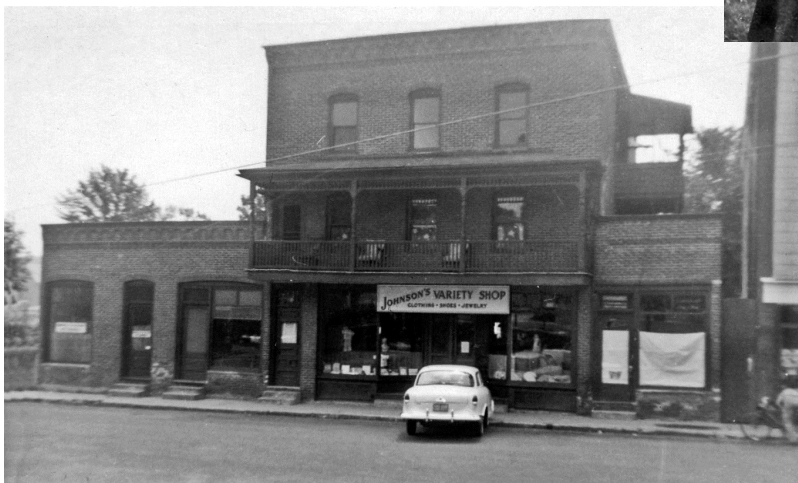
Telesphore was Henri's son. George said this photo belonged to his Aunt Carmen Roch, who owned the car in the photo. Carmen was a daughter of Dolenda Paradis Roch and Dr. Roch.

The Paradis block, named for owner Henri Paradis (per George), was located on Walker Street. Walker Street is now part of the driveway for the library/community center. The building(s) were on the east side of the road, slightly south of and across the street from the southern most long-block tenement house, approximately where the main entrance of the library is now located.



The photo above is from Carmen Roch's collection, and like most is unlabeled and undated, but for the word "Dolenda." We believe this is all of the Paradis sisters, although the photo shows 9 and only 8 were alive in the 1930s. Rita is on the far left. Dolenda is second from the right, and Diane is front, to the right. Only two of the sisters married.

We welcome any further information on these ladies as we would be pleased to forward to George Roch in CO.



The photo above is the building Henri Paradis owned and had his store in. Telesphore ran the main store after Henri died. The Paradis girls later ran a hat store and a music store out of two of the small side stores. Emile's Pharmacy may have been here as well. The Rambler American in the photo was owned and loved by Carmen Roch.

The Thompson Historical Society
P.O. Box 47
Thompson, CT 06277
www.thompsonhistorical.org
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A Follow-up to the March 2011 Q & A—The Thompson Jail to “Conserve Morals and Lessen Crime”

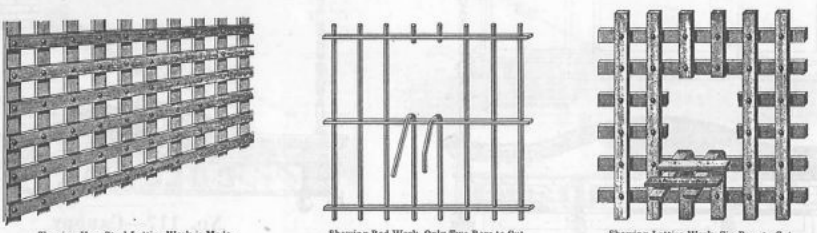
Back in our *March 2011* issue (available on our website) a reader questioned if Thompson had ever had a jail. At the time, we gave as much information as was available.

In February of this year, one of our researchers, Mr. Mark Snay, sent along further information—this time indicating the possible manufacturer of our jail found while looking through some old catalogs belonging to his Uncle and Grandfathers. North Grosvenordale is listed as a community where **E. T. Barnum Iron And Wire Works** supplied steel cells for county jails, village and city lock-up use.

Enjoy these pictures and more at: <http://archive.org/details/E.T.BarnumIronWireWorks>.

48 E. T. BARNUM IRON AND WIRE WORKS, DETROIT, MICHIGAN

A Secure Lockup or Jail Will Conserve Morals and Lessen Crime in Your Community



Showing How Steel Lattice Work is Made. Showing Rod Work, Only Two Bars to Cut. Showing Lattice Work, Six Bars to Cut.

This is only a partial list of places where we have furnished steel cells for county jails, village and city lock-up use. If your neighboring town is listed here, they have the best possible protection for their community.

And as marketed in the catalog—page 48 of the pdf:

“If your neighboring town is listed here, they have the best possible protection for their community.”

Connecticut.
Essex
Falls Village
Groton
Middlebury
North Gros-
venordale
New London