

Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

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January 2014

THS BOD Meetings

3/5/2014

4/30/2014

7 pm, Community

Please check your newsletter label for our membership info. See website for more information on fees.

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The Museum Shop

The THS thanks Sue Vincent, June Schoppe, Helen Flood, Val Iamartino, Kiku Andersen, and over 30 shop volunteers for the Gift Shop activities during the recent holiday periods. Our volunteers do many unsung tasks to bring the Old Town Hall to life - buying those special items, cleaning the Old Town Hall, packaging, advertising and running the shop. The proceeds are used to maintain our buildings and to catalog and preserve the items in our collection.

A special thank you to Helen Flood for coordinating our volunteers:

Pat Cheever, Lisa Faucher, Ramona Savolis, Shirley Houle, Ada Temple, Connie Carpenter, Lydia Tourtellotte, Karen Cole, Marilyn Dustin, Sue Leveille, Vikki Martin, Mary Kinne, Shirley Houghton, Jean Auger, Clarice Guillott, Bernadette Quercia, Peg Babbitt, Donna Lange, Isabella DeNoia, Kathy Lewis, Claudette Hoffman, Barbara McGarry, Cindy Obert, Ida Ransom, Lucille Barrette, Virginia Mainville, Estelle Bourgeois, Merc Robbins, Carol Romprey, Brenda Olson, Christine Kennedy, Linda Smalarz, Gail Leveille, Jo Godfrey, and Chris Tanson.

The Museum Shop 2013

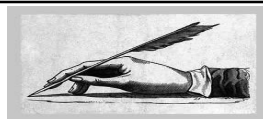
2013 Holidays, Museum Shop photo. Courtesy of the Villager Newspapers, Woodstock, CT. Vol. IX, No. 9. Jason Bleau Photo.



Jason Bleau photo

THS Contact info: jiamartino@charter.net—860.923.3776

President's Quill ~ Joe Iamartino



Friends,

As I write this, the temperature is hovering at +5 degrees. When I left this morning to teach, the car thermometer read -9 degrees. The darn furnace ran all night!

As I drove along, I was thinking about those Indians and pioneers of years gone by in their homes without such a furnace for heat.

No electric lights. How did they survive? Inventions! Each invention made the cold temperatures a bit more tolerable. The domestication of sheep. Turning the wool into warm clothing. Converting mutton / beef fat into tallow candles for light. Managing to start a fire itself. Using strips of bark for a wigwam covering. Wood and boards for the walls and roof of a cabin. Thatch for a watertight roof AND insulation. Wood pegs to hold the boards together or vines to hold the bark in place in case of wind.

Look at the history in a word we use to this day.....think about it.....'the fireplace'.

Why do we light candles or a fireplace when we want to be intimate with our loved ones? The memory of that communal warmth of long ago, huddled around the fireplace in real fur robes, telling stories, listening to the wind blow.

How different was the night then. No TV, radio, iPod music, video games. Conversation, singing, stories. Perhaps simple games. Indoor work—like making wood bowls, thread for clothes, arrows, or food. Staying warm, keeping the fire going, gathering the fallen limbs in the woods, bring in ice to melt. I don't think it would be boring because there would be so much to physically do. Would my body want to sleep more during the long winter months? I think so. I still wake with daylight in all seasons no matter what the actual time is (assuming I don't have to go to work when the alarm wakes me!).

I think I would be looking to get under the furs to simply stay warm when it was dark. When it was time to go to bed, we'd prepare the wood coals (French "couvre-feu," means "cover the fire," *curfew*) for the evening and turn-in.

I would like to go back in time for just a week and live with the Nipmuc Indians. I'd like it to be a stormy week too, just to see how it would be...

**Happy New Year to all of our
Friends ~ From the
Thompson Historical Society**

~Joe Iamartino

In the News

Happy New Year!

28 January 1864

Thompson- Ever since the first day on which I came to be their minister, the people of my charge have "showed me no little kindness" year by year giving me fresh reason to feel that "I dwell among mine own people." Lately they have brought me under new obligations of gratitude and service. The other evening a house full of them came to bring their friendly New Year's salutations. And they not only brought these, but they also brought very *substation*, and very *liberal proof* that their salutations were hearty. I wish, in this public way, to thank them, one and all. In return for these material things which they have given, may the Great Head of the Church give them abundant spiritual blessings, "good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over." - A. Dunning

Watch those icy roads!

16 February 1865

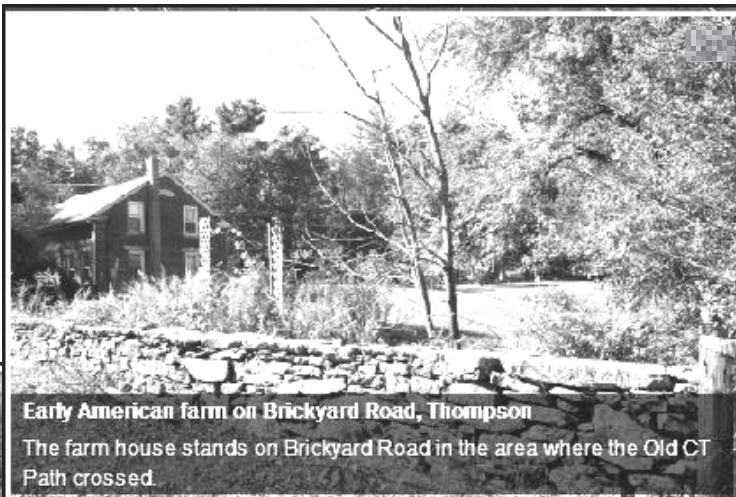
On Tuesday afternoon Miss Rugene Nichols and Miss Harriet Case of West Thompson, were riding in a sleigh near the Brick Mill in Rhodesville where the horse took fright and ran toward the bridge, and instead of turning across it he ran off the bank wall at the north side of the bridge, taking with him the sleigh and the young ladies down a distance of fifteen feet upon the ice in the river, and the horse was either killed by the fall or was drowned, as he flounced off into the water. The sleigh was smashed, but the ladies to the surprise of all soon walked up into the road, although it is feared that Miss Nichols is injured internally. Another hair-breadth escape.

Rediscovering Thompson's Place Along the Old Connecticut Path

UPCOMING PRESENTATION by JASON NEWTON

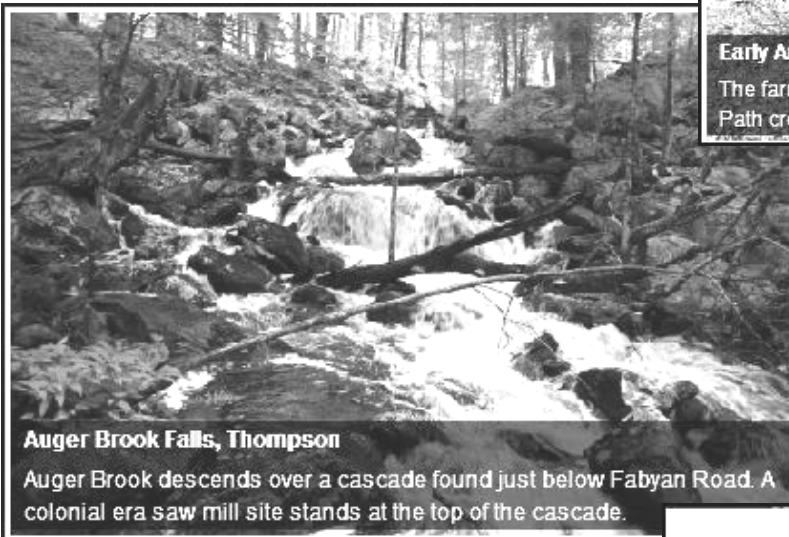
March 19, 2014, 7-9 pm, Community Room 2

The Old Connecticut Path, followed by the founders of Connecticut, is an important part of the history of Thompson and the American story. Ellen Larned, Thompson historian, provided a treasure map that opened the way to rediscovering the route of the path through Thompson and across Windham County. The Path is hidden in plain sight ready to be rediscovered for its historic importance and natural beauty. The presentation will connect the story of the Path with Connecticut history. Driving tours and walking guides to open the places that lie



Early American farm on Brickyard Road, Thompson

The farm house stands on Brickyard Road in the area where the Old CT Path crossed.



Auger Brook Falls, Thompson

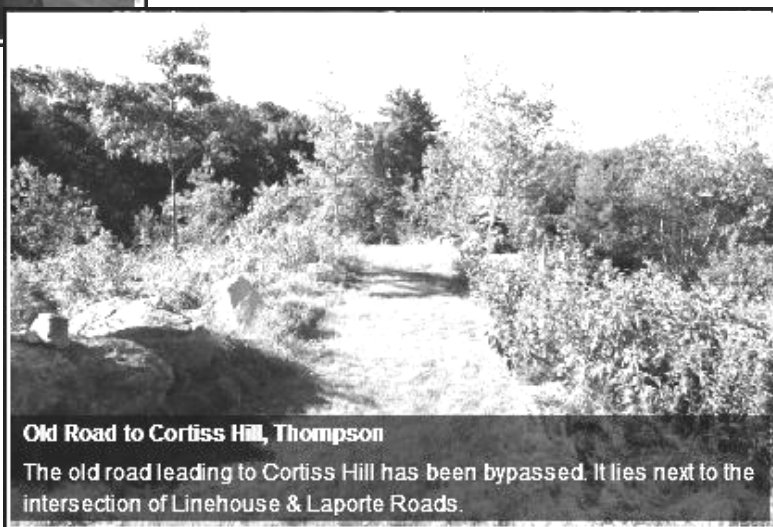
Auger Brook descends over a cascade found just below Fabyan Road. A colonial era saw mill site stands at the top of the cascade.

along the Path will be shared so that you can rediscover the Old Connecticut Path for yourselves.

Jason Newton is direct descendant of Rev. Thomas Hooker, the same Mr. Hooker who led his congregation from Cambridge to Hartford in 1636 along Old Connecticut Path. Mr. Newton is a retired psychologist and educator whose family history project led him to rediscover the Old Connecticut Path followed by his ancestors. His research and exploration

has been shared on the Old Connecticut Path site <https://sites.google.com/site/oldconnecticutpath/>.

YouTube videos showing the Path at the ground level, presentations in Connecticut towns along the Path and publications by the New England Historic Genealogical Society. The project to rediscover the Path across Massachusetts and Connecticut is ongoing. The best place for a walk to a part of the Old Connecticut Path is along the Quinebaug River/Auger Brook from Brickyard Road. This is within Corps of Engineers land, but the trail needs some clearing to be more accessible.



Old Road to Cortiss Hill, Thompson

The old road leading to Cortiss Hill has been bypassed. It lies next to the intersection of Linehouse & Laporte Roads.

Here is a link for a driving tour from Webster to Woodstock. This passes through Thompson with several points that may be of interest: http://www.everytrail.com/view_trip.php?trip_id=2223870.

A Tale of Two Sidings, Edward J. DeLuca, Jr.

Contributed by Mr. E. J. DeLuca, a writer for *The Shoreliner*®, the NHRHTA's glossy New Haven Railroad history magazine

This article is the recollections of some area residents as well as employees of the New Haven Railroad, and was first written sometime before 1997. Hopefully these details are factual and correctly recorded as they were relayed to me at that time.

Where the Norwich and Worcester branch of the then New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad crosses Buckley Hill Road in North Grosvenordale is the setting for this story. Single sidings located just north and south of the crossing were at one time used by four Town businesses. The much longer siding on the south side of the crossing served both Cluett Peabody (the manufacturer of Arrow shirts) and a candy company. Originally C.S. Allen, it changed to Deran and then to Borden. The shorter siding on the north side was shared by Faucher's Bakery and Johnson Corrugated. In addition to the accounts of those who delivered the freight, information for a Tale of Two Sidings was also provided by some of the people who received it. These sidings were serviced by the "local" freight trains that at different times either operated out of Putnam, CT. or Worcester, MA.

The siding on the south side of the crossing ran aside a lengthy platform and a series of warehouse buildings and facilities. Around one-quarter of a mile south of the crossing, the Route 12 Bridge passed over both the main line and that siding. The platform ran underneath that bridge and freight cars were unloaded on both sides of the bridge abutment.

Cluett Peabody got bales of cotton delivered by boxcar. They weaved and inspected the cloth there, then shipped it to their shirt sewing plants. Though they received a high volume of freight by rail, the majority of their outbound product was shipped by truck. Occasionally they would ship out a load by boxcar. Mr. Stanley Wielock (who was 80 years old and living in Thompson at the time of interview), worked at Cluett Peabody from 1938 to 1957, and spent a lot of time trackside. Besides driving truck, Mr. Wielock also worked unloading boxcars. He remembered when that siding was filled with as many as 20 boxcars. He went on to say that they unloaded "car after car after car" until they packed the warehouse full to the ceiling, just leaving room for the sprinklers. And as soon as the cars were emptied, they were pulled out and replaced with loaded ones. Mr. Wielock also said that the heaviest shipments usually arrived in the fall of the year.

Mr. Ronald MacLean, who was a conductor on the Putnam local in both the steam and diesel times, said that siding was connected to the mainline on both ends and was serviced from both sides. He referred to Cluett Peabody as a "huge factory" and said there was stuff going in and out of there "all the time."

While working trackside, Stanley Wielock saw many trains pass by. He counted freight trains with as many as 120 cars heading towards Putnam, but the trains coming from Putnam would have a lesser amount. That was because through this area the southbound trains traveled downgrade, while the northbound trains faced an uphill climb. Stan said the trains coming from Putnam could number from 90 to 100 cars and quite often had

trouble making it through that area. He watched trains slow to a stop when the engine lost its battle for traction and its wheels would start to spin. Any further attempt at progress was halted when the sparks began to fly. Standing only 25 feet away, he saw those wheels spin and "sparks coming out of there like there was no tomorrow." Those trains usually came to a stop before the Buckley Hill Road crossing and sometimes even prior to the Route 12 bridge. When the trains got into trouble, it seemed to Stan that when that "big steam engine" gave out one long whistle it was a call for help. A short while later he would hear a faint whistle in the distance coming from the direction of Putnam signaling help had arrived. When the pushing engine joined in, he'd see the nudge and the train would start to move. At first the wheels on the front engine would spin, but soon regain their grip on the tracks and off they would go. He never saw the pushing engine because once it got the train moving, back towards Putnam it went. Mr. Wielock said he witnessed such episodes and saw those wheels spin "many times."

That siding was also shared by a candy company. Though that business has seen three owners, Mr. Milton Ellis (at the time of interview) has worked there for the past 36 years, starting in 1957. Mr. Ellis, who (at that time) was 59 years old and living in Charlton, Mass., was in charge of operations there. He said the New Haven Railroad gave them "excellent" service. The candy company received corn syrup and coconut oil in tank cars. By boxcar came raisins, 100 pound bags of whole milk powder and 50 pound bags of both non-fat, dry milk and malted milk powder.

They would ship out boxcar loads of boxed chocolates to different parts of the country and 75 pound bags of cocoa powder bound for California. Their rail deliveries were scheduled



6/28/73—N. Grosvenordale. Tank Car 7705 as seen from north side of Route 12 railroad bridge.

on an in one day and out the next day basis and the different types of freight was received in rotation. Mr. Ellis said maybe they got a tank car of corn syrup, then a tank car of coconut oil and then a boxcar, averaging three cars of each per month.

(Continued next page.)

A Tale of Two Sidings...cont.

New Haven Railroad engineer, Mr. Earle Spinney remembers both Cluett Peabody and the candy company (as Deran). He said you could get candy “cheap” there, “go in and buy a whole box of good chocolates for only fifty cents, and if you knew the girls in there, you could do even better.” Earle also bought (Arrow) shirts in the shirt factory outlet, and even though you had to iron them yourself, he’d buy them for just a quarter or fifty cents.

Cluett Peabody ceased their operations in North Grosvenordale in 1957. The candy company continued to ship and receive freight by rail until around 1980. The New Haven Railroad serviced that business as both C.S. Allen and Deran. After changing ownership to Borden, and though their last day of candy manufacturing was on April 10, 1992, they’d continue to operate for a time as a store and warehouse.

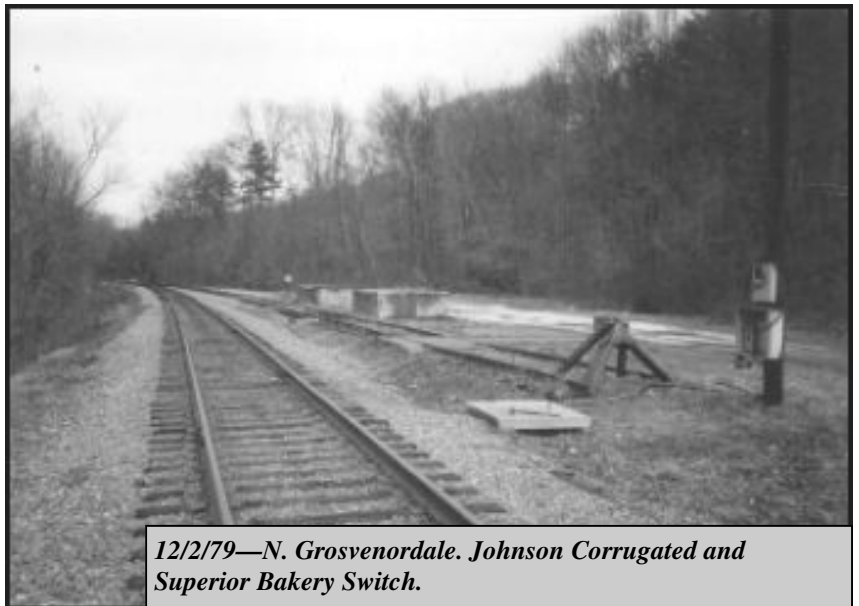
Now let’s go over to the other side of the street. The much shorter siding on the north side of the crossing was also quite busy at one time. Running from the main line south, its bumper is located about 60 feet from the crossing. That siding was shared by both Faucher’s Bakery and Johnson Corrugated. Earle Spinney remembered it as a “little, short” siding and said Johnson Corrugated used to get a lot of cars there.

Faucher’s Bakery started doing business with the New Haven Railroad around 1927. Mr. Louis “Skip” Faucher said they received flour from the Midwest by rail. Originally coming in cloth bags, they changed to paper after world war two. Both held 100 pounds of flour and came 800 bags per boxcar. The bakery received one car at a time, getting one or maybe two boxcars per week. Mr. Faucher remembered that whenever the railroad had a car for them, the freight agent at Putnam would call the bakery and let them know that it was coming. The railroad spotted their cars at the end of the siding right up against the bumper where their trucks would unload them. After the New Haven Railroad days, their freight was delivered in covered hopper cars that held close to 100,000 pounds of flour.

Though Johnson Corrugated did have freight delivered by the New Haven Railroad, it would not be on that siding. The New Haven would drop their cars at the freight house in Webster, Mass. Johnson Corrugated operated in Webster from 1956 until they moved to Thompson in 1962. Mr. David Johnson said they received at least five boxcars a week. Those cars contained between 35 and 50 rolls of paper that weighed around 400 pounds each. Every couple of months they would get a boxcar containing (100 pound) bags of corn starch. Used for the making of glue, each delivery would bring 500 or 600 bags. That business received these goods at both the Webster freight house and later

at the siding in North Grosvenordale.

Mr. Frank Marchionni started with the New Haven Railroad in March of 1966. At that time, he worked in the track gang out of Putnam and his boss was Nick Peters. In those days that siding was referred to as the house track and was even shorter than it is today. Frank said the siding was extended to its present length (to hold four cars) around 1971 (now the time of the Penn Central Railroad). When it was extended, two raised cement piers were built and a cement pad was added to better serve the customers present day needs. Johnson Corrugated’s cars were spotted at those piers. Measuring 4 feet high, 11 feet wide and 16 feet long (though one is slightly longer trackside), that company was now able to bring down fork trucks to unload the boxcars. The cement pad, which was installed between the rails near the end of the siding, was used by Faucher’s Bakery. A device that rested on the pad clamped underneath their hopper cars and blew the flour into their trucks. Both the Bakery and Johnson Corrugated would continue to get freight on that siding until around 1985.



12/2/79—N. Grosvenordale. Johnson Corrugated and Superior Bakery Switch.

At this time I want to again say that I assume these accounts to be factual. When you ask people for information about things that happened in the past, you hope for actual facts, but may get “to the best of my knowledge” information which of course can be debated. Either way, I hope you found this story interesting. Comments and corrections are welcomed. I want to thank Mr. Joe Iamartino for giving me the opportunity to have my work published by the Thompson Historical Society. ~E. J. DeLuca, Jr.

*Pages 4 & 5 photos courtesy of Francis Dalterio, Webster, MA.
Historian for the Providence and Worcester Rail Fan Club.*

~ "Pure Connecticut Yankee Stock" ~

GOVERNOR DAVIS TAMED THE HIRED MAN. HIS BROTHER TELLS ABOUT THE SOLDIER'S SIMPLE LIFE ON THE OLD CONNECTICUT FARM.

General George W. Davis, who was appointed by President Roosevelt the other day to fill the exacting position of Governor of the zone on the Isthmus of Panama through which the inter-oceanic canal will be constructed, spent his youth on a Connecticut farm. Away up in the extreme northeastern corner of the State, in the town of Thompson, close to the Massachusetts State line, he first heard the birds of summer sing. He comes of a family of frugal, Christian and studious characteristics. The old story and a half frame house where he was born still stands. His brother, Marcus Davis, the oldest of the eight children, still lives there and farms the place. His father before him was born there and also the grandfather of the general lived in the same house. The great-grandfather lived in Thompson also, but a mile and a half to the northwest of the present Davis homestead. So General Davis comes of pure Connecticut Yankee stock.

The boyhood of General Davis was much the same as the boyhood of any Connecticut boy born on a farm which revelled in rocks and hard land to till.

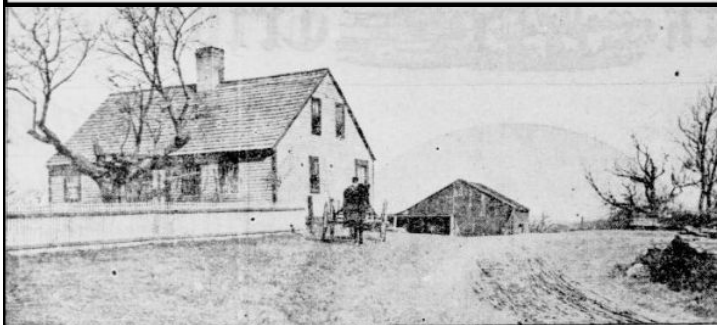
"Do I remember brother George as a boy? I certainly do," said Marcus Davis to a Tribune reporter. "George was the studious one of the family. He never had time to get in trouble like

He came up behind the hired man quiet like and tapped him on the shoulder. The hired man turned on him, for George was only a bit of a boy then, but as strong as a young steer. The hired man dropped the stick he had been beatin' the horses with and went for George. They tussled in the marsh for a moment or so, and then George got the hired man by the collar and he just shook him till his head flew back and forth on his shoulders like a thistle top. When he got through with the hired man he let him drop on the ground. Then George petted the horses and coaxed them to draw the load out of the mud by offering them apples. And not a word did George say during all this fuss. When the hay was unloaded he stepped up to the hired man and said:

"Don't strike the horses again." And the hired man never did.

"Brother George hasn't been up here to the old place in eleven years. But the last time he was here he walked about over the fields and seemed to take a great deal of interest in those old rocks with the drill holes in them. He was always a collector of curious things, and when a boy the room where we slept was filled with queer things he found in the woods and fields. There was hardly room sometimes for us with all of George's birds' nests and old rocks.

"While I was always crazy to run in the woods with a rifle and fish pole, George never was much of a fellow for sports—that is, not when he was home—but after he got in the Far West he became an expert rifle shot, and hunted all kinds of wild animals. He made his reputation as an engineer on the Washington Monument. I guess he has done some pretty good work for the government from all tell."



BIRTHPLACE OF GENERAL G. W. DAVIS.

Farmhouse in Thompson, Conn., where the new Governor of the American zone in Panama first saw the light.

New-York Tribune. (New York [N.Y.]) 1866-1924, April 03, 1904, Page 2, Image 16. Image provided by Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Persistent link:

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030214/1904-04-03/ed-1/seq-16/>.

The Evening Times. (Washington, D.C.), 15 July 1902. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress.

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84024441/1902-07-15/ed-1/seq-2/>

~ Joe Lindley Receives DAR Medal ~

On November 13th the Deborah Avery Putnam Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution presented a program by Joseph Lindley on the Thompson Tourtellettes. After the program, they presented him with the NSDAR Historic Preservation Medal. Congratulations Joe, and thank you for all that you do to preserve our rich history!



Joseph Lindley
Of Thompson, CT
Receives the
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution
Historic Preservation Medal

From the
Deborah Avery Putnam Chapter
In Plainfield, CT

November 13, 2013

Joe has gone to great lengths to preserve the Tourtellotte Memorial High School and Museum and the history of the Tourtellotte Family of Thompson, CT. Because of his efforts this beautiful, historic building has been placed on the National Historic Register, monies obtained and work done to repair it. The artifacts within the museum have been cataloged and restored as needed. It is believed to be the largest public high school museum in the country. He has kept alive the story of the Tourtelottes (the generous benefactors) for the Town of Thompson with presentations to the school children, the community and at the local community college. He has also written and published a book about the Tourtellotte brothers and their military careers in the Civil War. The research to produce this book was amazing.

Thompson Historical Society Directors and Officers For Year Ending June 30, 2014

Officers:

President	Joe Iamartino
Vice President	Joe Lindley
Treasurer	Sue Vincent
Secretary	Mark Snay

Directors:

David Eddy, Kathy Walsh, Sue Vincent, Joe Lindley, Jon Brynga, Lucille Barrette, John Rice, Christian Iamartino, Lisa Berg, Joe Iamartino, Burton Rhodes, Chris Wagner, Dawna Sirard, Mark Snay

Administrative:

Facilities	John Rice
Curator/Archives	Mark Snay
Digital Archives	Joe Iamartino
Insurance	Jon Brynga

Committees:

Events	Joe Iamartino, Mark Snay
Membership	JoAnn Witkowski-Thorstenson
Museum Shop	Sue Vincent, Lucille Barrette
Nominating	Burton Rhodes, Joe Iamartino



STOLEN DOGS FOR SALE

☞ These two life-sized, cast iron dogs, 100 years old (see photograph), were stolen from our property, known since 1842 as the Chandler House, in Thompson, Connecticut, last June 16th. Their origin is credited to Mr. William Henry Chandler, who had a mold taken in Boston from a beloved dog, from which two replicas were cast. The dogs have been on these granite steps since the mid 1800s and have become a local landmark. We feel that this is more than a personal loss and would very much appreciate any help your readers could give us in regaining them.

Mrs. D. E. Williams, Box 333,
Thompson, Ct.

Want to "GO GREEN?"

You can help the Society save on printing and mailing costs. To receive your newsletter via email in .pdf format, let us know by sending an email to Joe I. at his email listed on pages 1, 5 and 8. Thank You!

SEPT 1971

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Okay members! This is a great picture, and we think it most likely came from Alice Ramsdell. We need your help to figure out where this is! Several clues: the bridge, the brick-end house, the stream that parallels the road. What a wonderful picture of a young lad enjoying his youth! Send your best guesses as this has been a Mystery Photo for a very long time!



THS Contact info: www.thompsonhistorical.org; email: jjamartino@charter.net—860.923.3776