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# Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

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We're on the web! Visit us at: [www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)

June 2010

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## Calendar of Events:

Remainder of 2010 committee meetings will be held at the **Ellen Larned Memorial Building** at 7 pm on the following dates:

9/20/10

10/25/10

11/30/10

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## Walking Weekend ~ 20th Anniversary!

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**North Grosvenordale:** On October 9, 2010, Dave Babbitt will lead a tour of the North Grosvenordale Mill area, including the villages where mill workers lived since production commenced in the 1800s. This easy 1 hour walk begins at the Lions' Bandstand in Riverside Park, starting at 10 am.

**Thompson Hill:** On October 9, 2010, Joe Iamartino will lead a tour around the historic district surrounding the picturesque Thompson Common. The 1842 Old Town Hall and the Thompson Museum housed in the 1902 Larned Memorial Building will be open for display. The tour begins at 1 pm at the Old Town Hall, Chase Road, Thompson, CT.

**The Civil War** exhibit at the Larned Building opens Walking Weekend, October 9, from 10-2. If you have any Civil War artifacts you would like to loan the Society for this exhibit, please contact Joe at 860.923.3776.

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## Upcoming Events in Conjunction with the Thompson Recreation Dept.

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### *The Man in the Net ~ 10/14/10—Old Town Hall, 7 pm*

In 1958, this movie was filmed in Thompson. Featuring Alan Ladd and Carolyn Jones (Morticia in the Addams Family), the movie was directed by director Michael Curtiz, who won an Academy Award for directing the Humphrey Bogart classic, Casablanca. *The Man in the Net* was released in 1959. Thompson was renamed "Stoneville" in the movie, but many Thompson sites were filmed and local actors filled the chase scenes. See the movie and talk with local movie celebrity Clarence Ballard who played the deputy in the film!

### *Thompson's WWII Pilots ~ 11/11/10—Old Town Hall, 7 pm*

While many from Thompson served during World War II, a few brave Thompson men served as fighter or bomber pilots during the war. Local Thompson historian, Ron Tillen was raised in England and later moved to Thompson and he brings his unique wartime views to us during this talk. He will be discussing the stories of several Thompson pilots!

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## Society Officers / Contact Information:

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**President:** Joe Iamartino  
**Vice President:** Burton Rhodes  
**Treasurer:** Susan Vincent  
**Secretary:** Mark Snay  
**Curator:** Joe Iamartino  
**Photos:** Mark Snay  
**Website:** Blair Cole  
**Buildings Admin.:** Gregg Aubin  
**Newsletter:** JoAnn Thorstenson

### **Museum Shop:**

Lucille Barrette, Helen Flood, Henrietta Panu,  
Kiku Anderson, June Schoppe, Sue Vincent,  
Lisa Reinholdtsen

### **Contact info:**

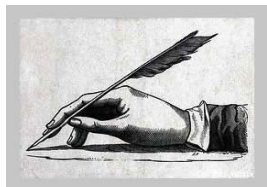
[www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)

860.923.3776

Or email: [jiamartino@charter.net](mailto:jiamartino@charter.net)

## President's Quill

Joe Iamartino



My wife Valentine, my first-born son Christian and I had the good fortune to live for a time in England and, later, in Hong Kong. We were there as I played my very small part in the booming globalization of the computer and data networking industry. In those days, we didn't own a home. Our weekends were free and we traveled extensively to see the sights.

In England, it was not unusual for us to wander into any village and find a home that was 500 years old or a church that had survived 700 years. Not all of the buildings were made of brick or stone. Nice timbered homes, inns or stores were being used in everyday life, not as museum pieces but as cared-for properties. Visiting my father, who lives a significant part of every year at his home in Italy, we thought nothing of having a quick pasta dinner in a nearby restaurant housed in a building close to 1300 years old. In beautiful Prague, I greatly enjoyed going for pizza at the little 500-year-old former mill building complete with a turning, working water wheel.

In Hong Kong, by contrast, little survived the onslaught of progress. Everywhere stood cranes and wrecking balls, knocking down that area's past, leaving nothing but new skyscrapers. Little remains today of the historic Hong Kong and for those interested in historic architecture, finding anything of interest requires great patience, photos and imagination.

Here in Thompson, we can't save every building. We should however agree that there are some that should be conserved for future generations. The recent destruction of important buildings in Thompson, the neglect of others and the gruesome modification of a few point out that we don't have a working plan in place. Some of those to be preserved will be in private hands, some will be owned by the town and some by organizations such as the Thompson Historical Society. One of my objectives for the 2010-2011 year is to pull together a list of the top 25 properties that should be conserved for the future. Then, we can decide together what can be done to help these buildings survive. I ask you to send me your candidates for such a list and be sure to tell me why your candidate structure should be preserved. I look forward eagerly to your letters and emails!

Send to Joe Iamartino: [jiamartino@charter.net](mailto:jiamartino@charter.net)

## The Demon Rum and other Sordid Affairs

30 May 1888

*Dr. Grosvenor, the owner of the Grosvenordale mills in this county, has been bound over in the R.I. courts on the complaint of maintaining a liquor nuisance; in other words, for renting property for grog shops. If one rich man is imprisoned for giving shelter to the rum business it will make the rum sellers and their minions howl, but it will give courage to men and women who are fighting the rum demon. A sordid millionaire who is willing, for a little gain, to see young men ruined, wives and children suffer, and homes made desolate, deserves greater punishment than the person who, being poor in purse, sells intoxicating liquor to obtain an easy-but not an honest-livelihood.*

13 March 1889

*Deputy Sheriff Park and Officer Arnold made a search at Grosvenordale yesterday at Jason Chandler's place and secured two kegs of beer. The warrant was issued by Prosecuting Agent Davenport.*

20 March 1889

*At North Grosvenordale, Officer Carver had Adolph Bridge tried before Justice Tourtellotte for selling liquor, which the officer had seized a few weeks before. The Justice fined him \$20 and costs. The same fellow and his wife assaulted Officers Davenport and Park on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February while making a search for liquor. Mrs. Bridge hid the liquor under her apron, and refused to give it up, and in the effort to secure it she and her husband assaulted the officers. Justice Tourtellotte tried them on this case on the 12<sup>th</sup> and fined the man \$8, and wife \$3 and costs.*

8 May 1889

*Paul Bonner, of North Grosvenordale, formerly a barber in Putnam, a few weeks ago, while here saw Officer Davenport and other officers making their way towards Thompson, guessing their errand, he went ahead, to notify the saloons of their approach. Last week he was hauled up before Justice Tourtellotte, for keeping and selling liquor, and fined \$30 and costs. Failing to pay, he was sent to jail.*

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

### Old Town Hall Restoration Update

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We've reached just over \$16,000.00 of our goal of \$25,000! Major repairs have been completed by Ron Doros, our Master Carpenter. Two major features of the restoration were the custom built mahogany plinths and column bases built for the Society by long-time member Bernie Davis. Bernie donated his time and expertise, which was not only his personal time, but engaged his entire business to help us restore the front of the Old Town Hall.

The Society faced a major decision with the Old Town Hall restoration project. When the Old Town Hall was constructed in 1842, the columns sat directly on the porch floor. Over the years, moisture and insects rotted the bottom of the columns. With each restoration, the rotted section of each column was cut away. To fill the ensuing gaps, restoration managers decided to use fancy column bases and plinths. With each restoration, the bases and plinths grew thicker. In our case, we too elected to go with a thicker base and plinth, built for us of the best materials and equipment by Bernie Davis.

Additional thanks to: Mr. Dave Babbitt who has been coordinating the painting activity for the Society, We thank him and the team for their efforts. The Beaupres, Blodgetts and Tansens for taking care of the grounds around the Society's two buildings. We appreciate all that you do. David Eddy and Airbrush Shack, Thompson, for their donation of the project announcement & fundraising thermometer signage. Great work!

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Main Street, North Grosvenordale, circa 1910

### Upcoming Newsletters:

Beebee's Den of Harlots:

**"Loose women and nervous horses in old Thompson!"**

An update on the March newsletter and **Quoin Buildings** in Thompson.  
We are still researching and will have more information soon.

### Membership Information:

**THS Dues:**

Members can find their paid status on the  
address sticker of this newsletter.

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*Memorial Day 1883 in New Boston as reported by the Webster Times*

*Volume XXV # 4, June 11, 1883*

Everybody knows the day was fine, but everybody does not know that the celebration in New Boston Memorial Day was perhaps better than all others which have preceded it, although but very little time had been devoted to the preparation of exercises, ect., which by the way is one of our peculiar characteristics.

All decided when the afternoon came to a close that the day had been fittingly honored, and the dead heroes who repose in the little cemetery adjacent to the village if they are permitted to see through spiritual eyes will know that the little community wherein they lived when in the flesh remember them greatfully once a year, and do honor to their memory by decorating their graves with beautiful flowers, by singing songs to their praise and glory, and by eulogising their noble deeds and heroic sacrifices.

There is no post of the Grand Army here, and only a very few veterans that reside in this immediate neighborhood, but what there are co-operated heartily with the no less zealous citizens to honor the day.

The procession formed in front of Murdock's hall at 2 o'clock under the direction and Marshalship of Jonathan H. Perry and marched to the yard where with appropriate exercises the graves were decorated. The last named ceremony was performed by the children under the supervision of Comrade Perry.

Returning to the hall behind the inspiring music of fife and drum the exercises began by singing "Our Braves" by the Glee Club, followed by Will Carlton's poem "Cover them over," read by J. D. Bates, and then another song by the Glee Club, "Not

Forgotten," after which the Rev. J. F. Simmons of Webster, delivered one of the finest addresses it has been our pleasure to listen to. Without canvassing the ground usually gone over by Memorial Day orators, the production was marked with originality which was soul refreshing.

The historical part of it was very interesting, the practical portion, very logical, and the application of the united whole to the occasion to which called it forth must have been apparent to everyone who listened. This is the second Memorial Day address Mr. Simmons has favored us with and we don't care if he comes again. The Memorial exercises proper closed with singing "The Star Spangled Banner" by Mrs. H. C. Leavitt, but after this a concert of war songs was given by the Glee Club which lasted about an hour, and which was an important feature of the exercises of the day.

The Glee Club is composed of the following named members. Mrs. G. A. Putney, Mr. and Mrs. G. Thurston Murdock, Miss Bertha Whiting, and Miss Emma King, all of whom performed their various songs and solos so acceptably as to call forth a vote of thanks from the audience. A vote of thanks was also given to Mrs. Geo. T. Murdock for the tasteful manner in which she arranged the flowers and decorations of the platform.

There were about one hundred people present who after the close of the exercises partook of a collation composed of sandwiches, cake, coffee, ect, which had been donated by the ladies of this vicinity. The management takes this opportunity to thank all who gave so liberally and to invite them all to come again.

*God Bless America!*

Friday, June 18, 2010 • THE WEBSTER TIMES • 3

## The quirky squire of Quinebaug



Aaron White, Esq.

Engraving: WEBSTER TIMES, Vol. 28, #40, dated Dec 3, 1886

Excerpt from article by Braniff, L. K. (2010, June 18). *The Quirky Squire of Quinebaug*. *Webster Times*, p. 3.

*The Squire even designed and had struck some metal tokens to spread his belief that paper money was worthless. The token's motto read: "Never keep a paper dollar in your pocket till tomorrow," & bore the figure of a sow and another motto using words from four different languages.*



This coin belonging to the Squire recently sold on eBay for almost \$300.00!

For more information on this colorful resident of Thompson, please see **Echoes of Old Thompson Volume 1**, page 246.

Additionally, page 253 has a wonderful representation of a map of New Boston area (Fabyan). The map is dated approximately 1869.

## The Last Green Valley Awards Grants

The Last Green Valley, Inc. is pleased to announce the recipients of this year's Last Green Valley grant awards totaling almost \$150,000. After a very competitive process, grants were awarded to 17 projects that conserve, celebrate, interpret, or enhance the Last Green Valley's significant natural and cultural resources, working agricultural lands, and recreational opportunities. **The Last Green Valley, Inc.** Is a member-supported nonprofit organization working locally to preserve the irreplaceable land, water, and cultural resources of the region.



The Thompson Historical Society and Thompson Renewable Energy Committee received \$6,000 to support their effort to revitalize the historic Wilsonville Mill and Dam, preserve an historic stone mill building, and pave the way for a future green hydroelectric energy initiative. This phase of the project will evaluate the structural integrity of the mill and assess the environmental integrity of the property and surrounding area. **-Lois Bruinooge, Deputy Executive Director—May 19, 2010**

*Dues item in December 2009  
Newsletter caught my attention.  
Check enclosed.*

*Thrilled at the picture of  
Chandler's dogs. Never pass the house  
without looking over to where they stood  
and remembering them. An icon for me  
from the days I was just a kid  
walking to/from school back in the  
late '20s and early '30s*

*Floyd C. Cole*

Note sent by F.C. Cole of Thompson & Nokomis, FL

## LIGHTNING KILLS A BANKER

James Elliott, President of Thompson  
Bank, North Grosvenordale, Conn.,  
Struck While Walking — Daughter Escapes.

NORTH GROSVENORDALE, Conn., July 14—James Elliott, fifty-five years old, President of the Thompson Bank in this town, was struck by lightning and instantly killed while walking toward his home late this afternoon.

Mr. Elliott was accompanied by his daughter who was temporarily stunned by the surge stroke of lightning which killed her father. Mr. Elliott was one of the most prominent citizens in this town. He is survived by a widow and four children.

The New York Times, published July 15, 1903 © The New York Times



### Help Wanted! Q & A

Q: This clay item was found in a cache of similar items in the woods near railroad tracks in Quinebaug. Can anyone tell us what this item is?



Q: Was there a stage coach hold-up in Thompson?

A: We know of rumors of such an event but nothing has come up in any document that the THS has seen. We do know the legend of buried payroll gold and silver in E. Thompson during the Revolutionary War when the British caught up with colonist paymasters. Help wanted on the stage coach story!

Mr. John B. Beck wrote:

Q: I was wondering if you know of a WWII Bomber crashing somewhere in Thompson during the 1940's? I had heard from a friend that a WWII Bomber had crashed in a field on North Road or Chestnut Hill Road in East Killingly in the 1940's. Then when I asked about it at the Putnam Library they told me that they thought a bomber crashed in Thompson sometime in the 1940's. I have also asked the Killingly Historical Society, New England Air Museum (NEAM), and the Killingly Villager Newspaper. I have also searched on Google about it. Maybe this is just an unfounded rumor or myth.

A: Joe Iamartino and the THS know of several planes piloted by Thompson residents, but none that crashed in Thompson CT. Does anyone have any information that might help Mr. Beck?

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Q: Sue Vincent recently purchased an interesting token on eBay. Anyone have any idea where it comes from? We can tell by the image that it was good for 5¢ at the bar!



### Letters to the Society

From Diane Duebber  
Westminster, MA  
May 2010

I am writing to you about a project I am working on that might interest you. Bob and I live in Westminster, MA, and we have a nice church here. We have gotten to know a member who grew up in Thompson in the 1930's in the old Roland Mills house on O'Leary Rd. before it burned down. His name is Carroll Arnold and he is now in his eighties, and typically remembers his early life very clearly.

His stories are wonderful slices of life, full of names and places that were familiar to me too so I started writing about them. He and I have been working at this project for a while now and it is turning out to be quite interesting. When it is finished I will have it bound and sent to you for the Historical Society.

Mr. Arnold drew a detailed picture of the house as he remembered it, but a real photo of it would enhance this project very much, so that is another reason for this letter. Do you think the Historical Society might have in its archives an old photo of this house? If you could find one and share it with us we would very much appreciate it. It would make a great cover photo.

I think you will enjoy reading these stories because memories like these are vanishing and they are too good to be lost before being preserved and shared. I will look forward to hearing from you.

*\*An archive search produced the **photo to the right**, titled "Grace and Roland Mills, O'Leary Road." The photo was sent by Joe Iamartino to Ms. Duebber for her project.*

*We look forward to receiving a copy of Diane's finished project for the Society's collection.*

*Thank you Diane and Bob!*

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### Board News:

- ♦ We have two long-time members leaving our board this year. The first is Alice Bastek and the second is Alice Biesiadecki. In addition to her many years on the board, Alice Biesiadecki has served as our photograph archivist. Current board member, Mark Snay, will assume the archivist role for the future. We thank both Alices for their time and expertise serving the Society.
- ♦ We are pleased to welcome Joe Lindley to the Society's board. He will be a valuable link to the Thompson school system.
- ♦ Special thanks to the Vincent family for hosting our annual meeting/picnic at their home. We hope everyone had a wonderful evening!



Quarterly Newsletter



The Thompson Historical Society  
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Thompson, CT 06277

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

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"Buttons and Bows" show,  
Tourtellotte Memorial High School, 1952.  
Photo courtesy of Gladys Tucker