

Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

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March 2010

Calendar of Events:

Board of Director Meeting
Dates - Spring 2010:

- April 22, 2010
- May 19, 2010

Meetings are held at the
Thompson Community
Center, 7 pm.

In this issue:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Events | 1 |
| • Membership Info. | |
| • Officers/Contact Information | |
| <hr/> | |
| • President's Quill | 2 |
| • Thompson Speedway Presentation | |
| • Accidents will Happen | |
| <hr/> | |
| • Mystery Photo Answers & Archived news continued | 3 |
| • Girders Arrive for the NY, NH & HRR Railroad | |
| <hr/> | |
| • 1905 Photo: New Bridge over French River | 4 |
| <hr/> | |
| • 1851 Fatal Train Accident in Wilsonville | 5 |
| • Newsworthy | |
| <hr/> | |
| • The Early Mechanics of Thompson | 6 |
| • Mystery Question | |
| <hr/> | |
| • Parlor Dramas: or, Dramatic Scenes for Home Amusement | 7 |
| <hr/> | |
| • Ask the Society | 8 |

Upcoming Events

Thursday, May 13, 2010 - 7 pm:
An Evening of American Historical Music with the nationally known **Heritage Band**. This event is a fundraiser to help restore Thompson's Old Town Hall, completed in 1842. The concert will be held at the Tourtellotte Memorial High School Auditorium.

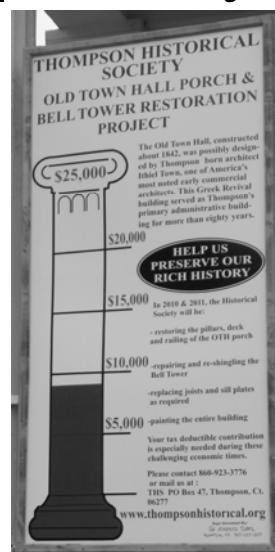
Tickets are \$5.00 for adults; admission for students 12 and under is free. Please call 860.923.3776 for tickets.

Sponsored by the **Thompson Historical Society** and the **Thompson Recreation Dept.**

Saturday, June 19, 2010:
TMHS Alumni Banquet
The 2nd Annual TMHS Alumni Banquet to be held at the **Thompson International Speedway**.

Please contact the **TMHS Alumni Association** to confirm date, time and ticket price at: www.thompson.ctschool.net/TMHSA, or call 860.928.2154 for further information.

Restorations are underway!



Thank you to all who have contributed! Please see our website for details on how you can help!

Membership Information:

THS Dues:

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

Contact information regarding dues/membership:

Thompson Historical Society
Attn: Membership
P.O. Box 47
Thompson, CT 06277

Contributing Membership:
\$25.00

Individual Membership:
\$10.00

Family Membership:
\$15.00

Student/Gift Membership:
\$5.00

Members are invited to purchase first-year memberships for new members for a low introductory price of \$5.00.

Society Officers / Contact Information:

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

Museum Shop:

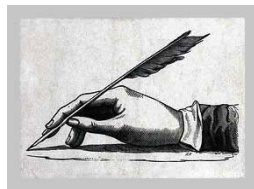
Lucille Barrette, Helen Flood, Henrietta Panu, Kiku Anderson, June Schoppe, Sue Vincent, Lisa Reinholdtsen

Contact info:

www.thompsonhistorical.org
860.923.3776
Or email: jiamartino@charter.net

President's Quill

Joe Jamartine



Folks,

I am pleased to announce that JoAnn (Witkowski) Thorstenson has taken over the Society newsletter. The issue you are reading is her first for us and I am sure you will agree that she's done a wonderful job. I am so grateful that JoAnn volunteered to take on this position. Feel free to contact her at jthorstenson@charter.net with any comments, suggestions, best wishes or compliments!

The History of the Thompson Speedway

About 325 of D.R. Hoenig's closest friends and family attended the March 18th telling of the Thompson Speedway history, including his father Donald. The Speedway is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. Opened on May 26, 1940, the Speedway was soon known as the *Indy of the East*.

Hoenig's presentation contained short videos showing the racing at different periods: 1956 - the sports car track was linked to the speedway oval; 1960 - racing with cutdowns; a NASCAR[®] video talking about the founding of NASCAR at the Thompson Speedway.

There was a section dedicated to the addition of golfing to the East Thompson racing venue and Don Hoenig's golf accomplishments were discussed.

D.R. Hoenig's presentation also showed the range of non-racing entertainment used over the years; midget wrestling, car jumping, marching bands, monster trucks, demolition derbies and fireworks.

Overall, the 90 minute presentation was well received by racing enthusiasts of all ages. Those interested in a DVD of the presentation should contact the Historical Society.

Accidents Will Happen

From the archives of the Killingly Historical Society,

Windham County Transcript articles from the past.

Supplied by our friend Marilyn Labbe (continued on pg. 3)

28 August 1889 - Thompson

Mrs. Eliza Scarborough of Thompson, Mrs. E.S. Scarborough of New York, daughter of the first named, and Miss Elliott of New York, sister of Mrs. E.S. Scarborough, met with a very serious accident at East Thompson, Wednesday afternoon. They had started from Thompson for a picnic at Point Breeze in Webster, going though East Thompson. When near "Porter Plain" one of the horses switched his tail over the reins. The lady driver, in attempting to get control of the rein again, frightened the horse, and both he and his mate began plunging. They struck against a stone wall, overturning the carriage, Miss Elliott was thrown clear out of the carriage. Mrs. E.S. Scarborough escaped serious injuries, but Mrs. Eliza Scarborough, a lady nearly 70 years old, was less fortunate. Her clothing caught in the carriage and the horses broke into a dead run, dragging her nearly a mile, she finally escaping by her clothing tearing away. Nearly all her clothing was torn off, and her body was shockingly bruised and badly cut in many places. Michael Kirby caught the horses on the dead run when they had reached his farm home. The carriage was slightly damaged. Dr. Holbrook was in a carriage right behind and hastened to succor. Mrs. Scarborough was cared for at a neighboring farm house and later removed to her home. Fortunately she was not injured about the head, and while her injuries are serious, it is now believed she will recover.—Webster Times.

6 August 1890 - Thompson

The venerable mother of Thos. D. Sayles was severely bruised, recently, by falling down stairs. She was not seriously injured.

18 October 1891 - Thompson

It seems a time of unusual casualties.

Jesse Bowen on Saturday inflicted an ugly wound in his leg with an axe.

George Bugbee is home to recover from a broken limb and a badly sprained ankle.

Mrs. Eden Davis fell on Monday dislocating her shoulder.

Our courteous mail carrier, Miss Mary Wilkes has been off the route for a week or two past suffering from the effects of a sprained ankle.

Walter Bates died Sunday evening, 1st. inst.

THS Newsletter, December 2009 Mystery Photo!

Please take a glance back to our December 2009 newsletter, page 3. Although it could not be determined where the pictured house was located, we did receive some feedback as follows:

"The cordwood lining the road suggested that the house belonged to either a minister or a teacher. It was not uncommon in the mid- to late 1800s that a contract for these professional services stipulated that a certain amount of cordwood was to be delivered by a certain day."

*Continued news from the Killingsby
Historical Society, a recent email
from Marilyn Labbe:*

"I took a couple of envelopes home of the Bernie Dupont things, one was about the Observer being sold to the Patriot. The article was written 14 Oct. 1962. The article is about how different people feel about losing the Observer."

Here is one from a Thompson person: Anyone know George Bates, the first selectman of Thompson? We stopped to chat with him about this matter the other day and found him busy at work in the picker-stick plant on Route 193. With him was one of his four sons, all of whom are employed at the Francis J. Bates & Sons Factory-as both administrative officers and workers.

The plant, established in the late 1860s, also turns out handles for implements, and the red barn-like structure has been a familiar sight to motorists for many years.

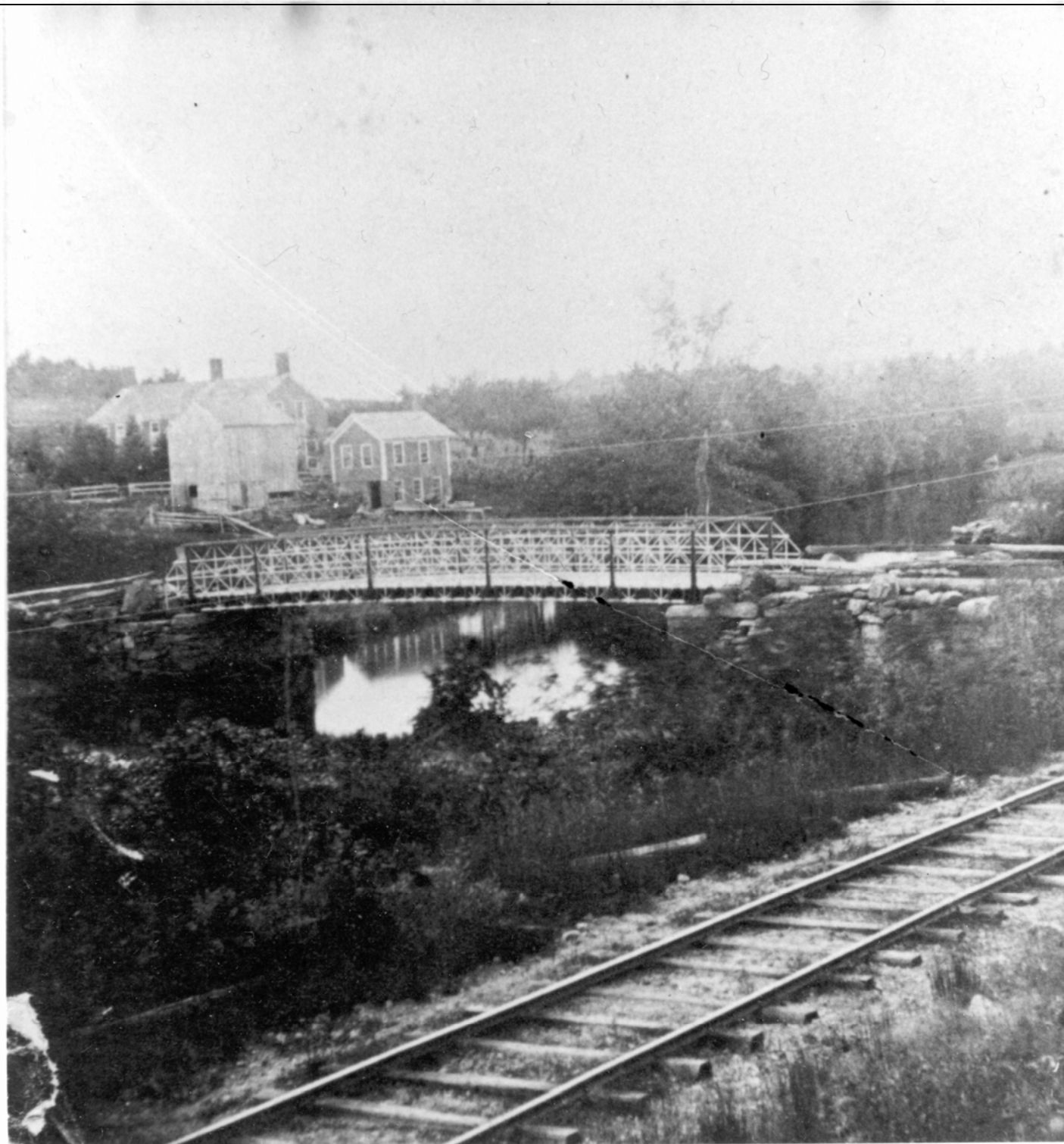
December 6, 1901 (see picture pg. 4)

North Grosvenordale.

—

Iron girders for the bridge have at last arrived and were placed in position last Sunday. The main girders that run across and over the track of the N. Y. N. H. & H. R. R. weigh over twenty-two tons each and were swung into position by the aid of two large derricks under the direction of the bridge Construction Company of New York. The bridge abutments have been in readiness for several months past, and now that the iron work has finally arrived and been put in position no time will be lost in laying the heavy planking for immediate use. It is expected all will be completed and the bridge in regular use at the end of the present week. This bridge improvement which has been made by the cooperation of the N. Y. N. H. & H. R. R. and the town of Thompson will eliminate one of the worst grade crossings along the line of the Norwich and Worcester Branch, being the one at the south part of the village which will be permanently closed up. Travellers driving south and through the village will take the lower road east of the factory which will lead directly to and over the new bridge. It is a strong piece of work and will last for many years.

**The “New Bridge” over the French River near St. Joseph Church.
To orient yourself in this picture, the church is to the left of the bridge and the
current Town Hall to the right. Photo circa 1905.**



The Sad, Short Story of George Donkissley

"Although by 1851 the Norwich and Worcester R.R. had been in full operation for a full decade, the general public still did not use necessary caution on or near the railroad property. On December 19, 1851 a man was killed in Norwich when he stepped in front of a moving train. But the most tragic accident of all occurred on September 22, 1851 near the Wilsonville station in Thompson when a young man in a carriage drove across the track in front of an oncoming train. He was returning from a visit to the doctor as his wife was in labor, and was killed in sight of his home. His mother, witnessing the accident, rushed out and held his crushed head in her hands."

*From Elmer F. Farnham's book
"The Quickest Route: The History of the
Norwich & Worcester Railroad"
Pequot Press, 1973*

Additional research by our faithful, long distance correspondent, and former Wilsonville resident, Ted Raszka, indicates this young man was George Donkissley, born 1828, died 1851. He was 23 years old when he died in the sight of his home.

They may have lived close to the tracks in company housing; the single family homes across from Sam Adams' store. More likely, the tenement homes on Route 12 on the west side of the road on the very sharp corner in front of the Keegan house. These two large tenement homes were for the benefit of the mill workers. They were torn down in the very early 1940s.

Mr. Donkissley's wife was pregnant so he was probably returning from N. Grosvenordale after seeing a doctor.

A check of the Wilsonville cemetery records show a George Donkissley, 1828-1851, 23 yrs of age.

Further cemetery records show that a George W. Donkissley, son of George Donkissley, was born in 1851 and died in 1891, 40 yrs of age.

We do not know where George W. lived for his 40 years, but he is buried in Wilsonville with the father he never knew.

Newsorthy

Starting April 1st the **Old Town Hall** will be closed for renovations. It is expected to reopen in November.

The Museum Shop will be temporarily relocated to the Ellen Larned Memorial Building and Museum (ELM).

The ELM Museum and the Museum Shop will be open starting the first Saturday of July through November.

Saturday hours are 10:00 am to 2:00 pm.

We are preparing a new Civil War exhibit this spring and hope that you will visit.

Special openings for school or group tours, and out-of-town visitors, can be made by calling 860.923.3776.

Additional Shop News: 2010 Calendars and the book, *Echoes of Old Thompson II*, are still available and are at marked down prices. Call 860.923.5728 for more information.

The **TMHS Alumni Association** has music seats available for private markings. For a \$100.00 donation, individuals or families can pay for a seat to be reupholstered. A fine marker plate will be attached to the chair and the chair will be permanently installed in the TMHS Music Room across from the Memorial Room at TMHS. Applications and donation forms are available in the December edition of the *Hilltopper* at <http://www.thompsonpublicschools.org/TMHSAA/index.html> or by emailing TMHSAA@charter.net.

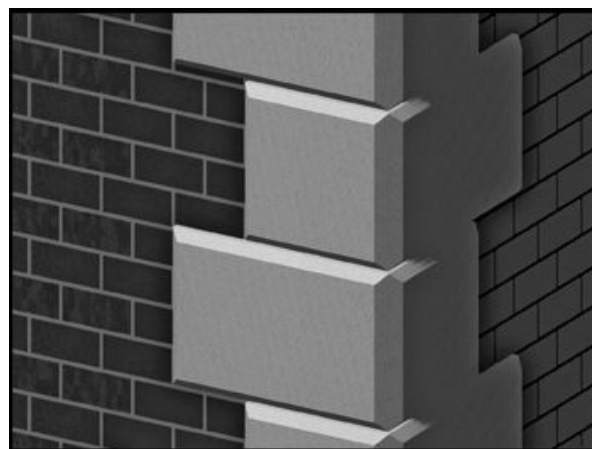
The Early Mechanics of Thompson

Update on our **December 2009** newsletter *Ask the Society* section regarding “Who is George Dexter?” The answer contained information that Mr. Dexter had given an important presentation to the Thompson Grange in 1914 called “The Early Mechanics of Thompson.”

In the newsletter, Joe Iamartino remarked: “*I wish I had that paper.*” Incredibly, on March 27th, our First Selectman, Larry Groh, and his mother-in-law, Jane Ellison presented Joe with the original 1914 Mechanics document along with other items and photos purchased many years ago from the Ryan estate.

This donation to the Society is of great interest as it describes in detail the construction of a particularly unique style of homes in Thompson — the brick-end houses with quoin corners.

Jane & Larry—the Society can’t thank you enough for stepping forward with such rich information!



Quoin Corners

To the left is a fine example of a brick-end house with quoin edges and four chimneys; both photos show these features well.

This home still stands on Quaddick Road and was formerly the Munyan/Bennett residence.

In an upcoming newsletter we will attempt to locate all of the Dexter-style brick-end homes in Thompson.

Our **MYSTERY QUESTION** to you: Can you help us locate these homes in Thompson? The Dexter-style homes have four chimneys, and quoin edges. Call 860.923.3776, or email info and/or pictures to jjamartino@charter.net.



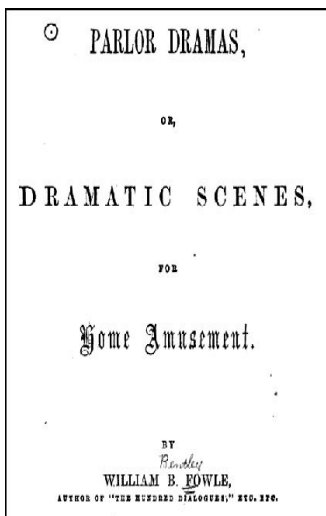
Thank you to our Treasurer, Sue Vincent, who found this Broadsheet from 1857. According to records, the Rawsonian Institute was a former school on Thompson Hill.

On April 29, 1857, Thompson residents were treated to a special night of entertainment. The Town Hall was the setting for an exhibition featuring plays and skits of the time.

Admission was 15 cents and "The Proceeds to be appropriated towards enlarging their Library."

Three of the plays in the program that evening were by Mr. William Bentley Fowle. If you would like to read the plays, they can be found at: **Google® Books** by typing in: *Parlor Dramas: or, Dramatic Scenes for Home Amusement by William Bentley Fowle.*

(www.books.google.com)



EXHIBITION.

The RAWSONIAN INSTITUTE.

Respectfully announce to their friends and the public in general, that they will give an Exhibition

IN THE TOWN HALL,
In
THOMPSON,
Wednesday Evening, April 29, 1857.

PROGRAMME:

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT,.... R. L. GAY.

MUSIC.

TABLES TURNED,.... A Drama.

COUNT ALMA, A Spanish Nobleman, a slave in Algiers,
HELENA, his wife, a slave,
FLORA, { their daughters,
ISABELLA, {
PETER FOLGER, a Yankee captain,
ISAAC COFFIN, a cabin boy,
OFFICERS,

D. R. Ballou
Miss A. A. Mowry
Miss M. J. Elliott
Miss L. R. Sessions
A. D. Elliott
J. J. Mason
Messrs. Graves, Mills, Vinton and Warren

MUSIC.

COMPOSITION,

MISS H. A. WARE.

WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

MR. MANLY, a merchant,
MRS. MANLY, his wife,
MYSTILLA, her sister,
BRIDGET, the cook,
KITTY, the chambermaid,

T. T. Graves
Miss S. E. Kinney
Miss C. E. Knight
Miss L. R. Sessions
Miss H. A. Ware

MUSIC.

COMIC DECLAMATION, A. D. ELLIOTT.

MUSIC.

COMPOSITION, MISS R. L. SESSIONS.

YOUNG AMERICA.

JACK,
BOB,
DICK,
BILL,
TOM,

A. F. Warren
L. P. A. Exton
J. A. Exton
E. C. Vinton
T. T. Graves

SAM,
HARRY,
FRED,
NED,

J. H. Cruft
J. J. Mason
J. F. Mills
E. E. Graves

MUSIC.

ORATION, "OUR COUNTRY," Original, . . . D. R. BALLOU.

TEA PARTY.

MRS. HYSON, Lady of the house,
MRS. GROSS, Keeper of an Intelligence Office.
BRIDGET, { Girls seeking places.
ALICE,
MRS. DRAWL,
MRS. DULSE,
MRS. CAYENNE,
MRS. PROBE,
MRS. SHARPE,
MISS FIDGET,

Miss L. R. Sessions
Miss J. M. Elliott
Miss H. A. Ware
Miss A. A. Mowry
Miss C. E. Knight
Miss H. A. Ware
Miss C. H. Chandler
Miss M. J. Elliott
Miss S. E. Kinney
Miss S. E. Mills

MUSIC.

COMPOSITION, Miss A. A. Mowry.

The Secret, . . . A Farce.

MONSIEUR DUPUIS,
MADAME DUPUIS,
VALARE,
ANGELICA,
THOMAS,
PORTER,

A. R. Rawson
Miss L. R. Sessions
R. L. Gay
Miss S. E. Mills
D. R. Ballou
J. H. Cruft

MUSIC.

VALEDICTORY, A. R. RAWSON.

ADMISSION, 15 CENTS.

The Proceeds to be appropriated towards enlarging their Library.

Edward H. Flake, Printer, Foster Street, Worcester, Mass.

Quarterly Newsletter



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

www.thompsonhistorical.org

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Ask the Society

March 2010

Q: What is the CCC?

A: The CCC was known as the Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC began in 1933 under President Roosevelt's "New Deal." The job program was intended to relieve poverty and unemployment during the Depression. People of all education levels and work backgrounds were employed by the CCC.

In the Thompson area, workers built trails, roads, bridges and phone lines. They also fought fires, planted trees, researched historical homes and studied local art.

The CCC helped the WPA convert the Thompson Road and Bus Garage into the new Town Hall still in use today (see photo at right).

With the attack on Pearl Harbor launching the US into WWII, the CCC ended in 1942.



*Thompson's Old Bus
Garage. Built with
assistance from the CCC*

Send your questions to:

Thompson Historical Society
Attn: Q & A
P.O. Box 47
Thompson, CT 06277
~or~
jjamartino@charter.net
860.923.3776

Q: Where is Gay Road and does it still exist?

A: Gay Road was a short stretch of road between Routes 21 and 44. Due to the implementation of the 911 emergency response system many changes, including changes to existing road names were made. This short stretch of road became known as a continuation of Fox Road. **Thank you to Charlie Seney of Putnam, former Thompson resident. for this information.**