



The Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

www.thompsonhistorical.org

September 2008

Calendar of Events

All are welcome to attend membership meetings which take place at the Community Center at the Thompson Public Library at 7 PM unless otherwise stated. Board meetings (7 PM at the Community Center) are for directors only.

Board of Director Meeting Dates

Working meetings will take place 7-9 pm 9/25., 10/9, 10/23, 11/6. Call for other times. 923-3776

Membership Events & Presentations:

*Saturday, Oct. 11, 2008
Walking Weekend Walk
29 - 10 AM, Mill Village
Memories.*

Join First Selectman Dave Babbitt, a retired educator, on this easy 2 hour adult stroll through the well-preserved mill village of North Grosvenordale, once one of the state's largest producers of cotton cloth. See where the workers lived, played and manufactured their product, and how the railroad, river and families made the community a success. Meet at the Lion's Bandstand directly off Riverside Dr. (Rte. 12) across from Town Hall.

*Sunday, October 12, 2008
Killingly's Tercentennial
Celebration- A Walk
Through the Old North
Parish - 1 PM, Thompson
Hill*

Join Joe Iamartino for an easy 1 hour tour of the registered historic district at Thompson Hill. The Tour will start at the Society's Museum at the 1902 Larned Building and end at the 1842 Old Town Hall. The discussion will center on the period prior to 1785 when Thompson became an independent town. Rain or shine- will move indoors to the Old Town Hall if raining.

Reminder: **Membership dues are:**

Individual Membership- \$10;

Family Membership- \$15;

Contributing Membership- \$25;

Student/Gift Membership- \$5

Dues to be paid by July 1, 2008 for the 2008-2009 year.

Mail to:

Membership, PO Box 47,
Thompson, CT 06277

Questions: Call 860-923-3776 or email: jiamartino@charter.net

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Officers / Contact Info:

President: Joe Iamartino

Vice President: Burton Rhodes

Treasurer: Susan Vincent

Secretary: Ruth Barks

Curator: Joe Iamartino

Photos: Alice Biesiadecki

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

Website: : Blair Cole

Bldgs Admini. : Gregg Aubin

www.thompsonhistorical.org

or call Joe Iamartino:

860-923-3776;

jiamartino@charter.net



Thompson-born General George Davis, with many notable achievements to his name, was the first Governor of the Panama Canal Zone after it was annexed by the U.S.A.

President's Quill:

For many of us, finding the time for civic or volunteer activities is near impossible. Those who do give some time wish they could do more but simply have to put work, children, ill parents or other priorities first. Yet, sometimes, we have to make time if we believe if something is necessary enough.

While I am passionate about history, I am not blind to the fact that we are currently at war, energy costs are sky-high, people are losing their homes, an election is coming, education costs continue to escalate and others fear losing their jobs. It is at times like these that we need to band together, even for a short time, for a positive purpose. It reinvigorates our soul and makes for a better community!

The Society's goal this year is to 'catch up' on the cataloging and preservation of donated historical items in our archives. We accepted items into our collection soon after our start in 1968 and each year, the archives continued to grow. Just a few of our members carry the historical knowledge of many of the donated items now. It is paramount that we permanently capture the historical background of the items in our collection before this information is lost forever.

We have volunteers responsible for identifying the items in our collections, assigning inventory control numbers, recording pertinent historical information and filing in recorded locations.

I am asking our members to be patient with us while we undertake this worthy task. While we might be quiet for a while, we are certainly working behind the scenes to build a better archive for our Society.

I want to thank Lucille Barrette, Jean Cole and Ruth Barks for their work in the museum and hope their fine work will be pushed forward with more support from other teams.

On a different subject, the Ellen Larned Building was home to a large hive of honey bees. Bill Barrette and a number of dedicated volunteers donned protective gear and moved the bees and their hive to a new location, complete with honeycombs drenched in honey. I admit that I had a few licks and it could be the best honey I have ever tasted! I am told that the honeybees will be very happy in their new location.

Lastly, Gregg Aubin will be responsible for our building maintenance and support services. We appreciate having him aboard to fill Blair Cole's shoes, a tough act to follow. Thanks Gregg... .. JJ

More Miscellaneous Topics

Village Improvement Society:

Paul Giguere reports that the Croquet on the Common event held August 9th was a great success, continuing a tradition of sports on the Common dating back many years. Historically, the Common hosted lawn tennis matches, baseball games, target practice and horseshoes to name just a few.

Society member Donna O'Scolaigh Lange's artwork will be featured at Celebrations from 9/19 thru 10/26. Visit

www.celebrationsshoppes.com or check out our Museum Gift Shop, first Sat. of every month.

Received a nice pamphlet from Jane Johnson concerning the Dedication of the Monument to the Soldiers of the Civil & Spanish Wars (on Thompson Hill). Dedicated May 29, 1921.

Mystery Question: Ken Goloski confirmed that the Buck Hill home (now gone) was located at the State line. The barn left of the house is still there today, albeit covered with vines and weeds. We have no info from readers on the Fairbanks hse.

Donations to the Society

Wow! Donations came from all over the planet! Here are some of the donations... ..

Lucille Barrette donated books that we sold on eBay to benefit the Society. Any one looking to donate books to sell for the benefit the Society should call 923 3776.

Ruth Barks passed along copies of early Thompson Congregation Church records dating from 1732 found at the New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston, MA.

Maurice Santerre donated the old waiting chairs from the Santerre barber shop. Nice!

Larry Groh Jr., on behalf of family members, passed along a package of great racing material dating back to the early days of the Speedway.

Barbara Rawson delivered A.C. Peterson photos of the 1988 Cong. Church fire & 1938 storm w/ the fallen Cong. Church steeple.

Sue Vincent donated 1890s Thompson annual reports & other photos she purchased on eBay.

Joyce Desruisseau donated 1756 -1795 church records published in the 1888 and 1889 Putnam Patriot newspaper.

Thanks to all not named!

**Thompson Raceway "The First Place to Race"
Museum Exhibit— First Saturday of every
month— 10 am— 2 pm through December 6.**

David Belden's vintage 1950s-era Lotus racer graces the lawn on the June '08 opening of the Society racing exhibit. Many thanks to contributors Geoff Bodine, Ken Bouchard, Mark DaVia, Lou Funk Jr. as well as exhibit designers Sue Vincent and her sister Linda . Come visit!



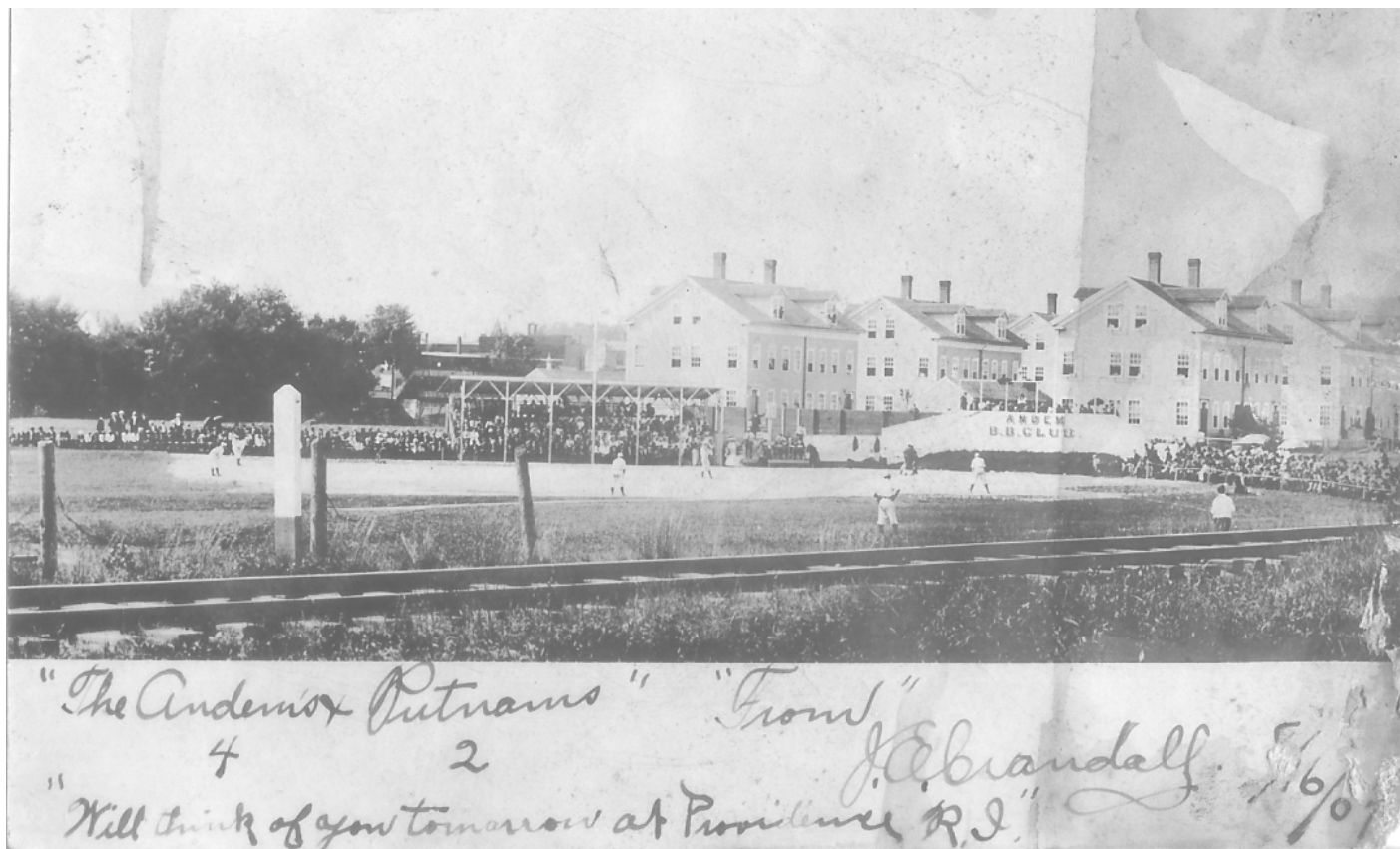
Many thanks to David Belden and his wife for helping to create and for narrating a wonderful history of the Thompson Raceway.

Below: A great view of the East Thompson train station c1910. The station was an important because it sat on the important Boston, Hartford & Erie RR (c1869) and on different RR line to Southbridge. The two lines helped create the station hamlet of East Thompson. The 2008 collectible wooden building will be the E. Thompson Station. According to Lucille Barrette, it will be our first multi-building collectible design, available at year end.

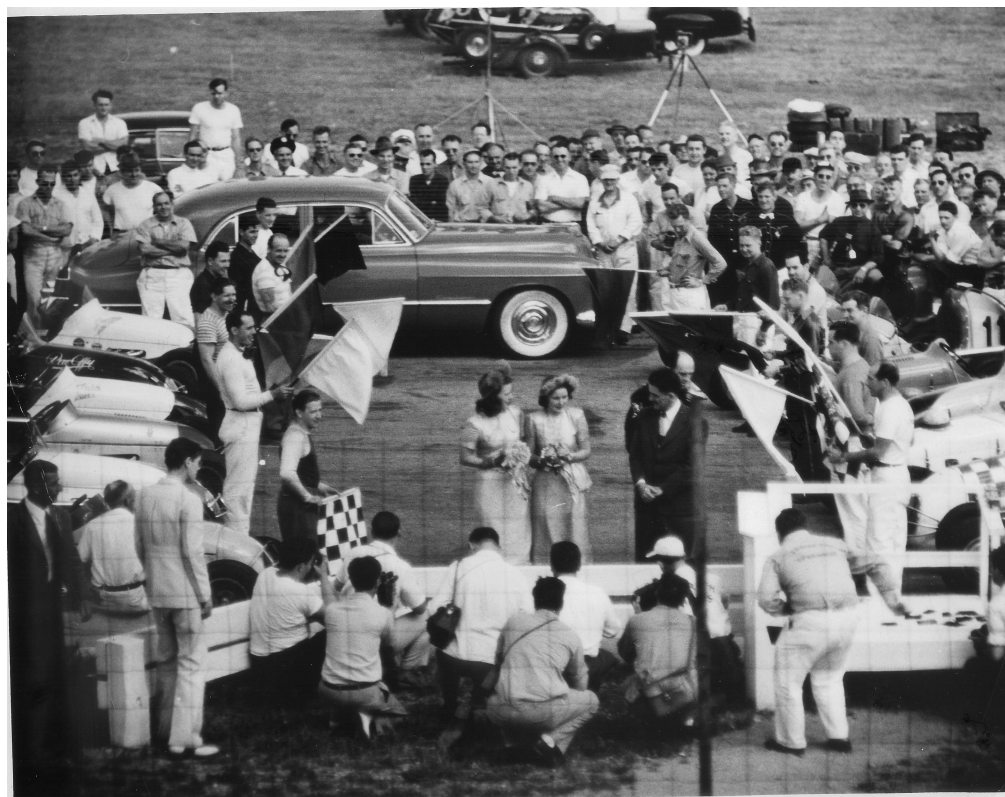


Miscellaneous Notes:

- ?? The October 2008 issue of Early American Life has an excellent article, richly illustrated with superb photographs, about Sue & Rob Vincent's Greystone Farm.
- ?? Richard & Leslie Strauss are writing a book about Connecticut outhouse lore. If anyone would like to contribute a photograph, story, poems or legend about a specific outhouse, contact Leslie at 860-526-2350 or www.lstrauss@century21.com.
- ?? Congratulations to Jane Johnson. She received the DAR Community Service Award. Jane is a director of the Society.



In the last newsletter, there was a newspaper clipping describing a baseball game with the Andems of North Grosvenordale playing in front of 1500 people. Here is a 1907 image of the Andems playing the Putnams.....



In the January 2008 newsletter, we ran a clipping submitted by Marion Howard describing a marriage at the Speedway (about 1948) between Miss Sophie Hallock of Waterbury, CT and Chet Gibbons of Worcester. Justice of the Peace Donal Howard officiated.

In the package of photos that Larry Groh Jr. delivered to me, I saw this photo and thought it might show the wedding described in the article.

For those interested, the best man was the well-known racer Bill Schindler and the bridesmaid was Miss Ronni Karsensky. I can't guarantee that this is the wedding described but it sure does seem to fit many of the details in the article.



Dave Babbitt believes that this photo is probably Louie Lombardo's tavern before the Arrow Grill took its spot next to Talabac's Market in North Grosvenordale. Dave said that the Hampden Ale that is advertised overhead was his father's favorites. Anna Naum believes that the man with the tie is named Lafontaine who formerly worked for Faucher's Bakery and Duffy's Bakery. The other man is Lou Lombardo who operated a bar where Jim's Pizza is now in North Grosvenordale. Thanks for the help Dave B, Jane J, Dave J, Jim and Anna Naum. A meatball sandwich for 10 cents!!!

Ted Raszka and his sister Katherine are asking for help with names for this Wilsonville shot
 Top left: Susan Majercik, Edith DiCarli, Carl Langer?, ?, ?, ?, Martin Dungel, ?, ?.
 Front Row. ?, ?, ?, ?, Anna Majercik, ?, Katherine Keegan, Josie, Sobosilk.

Please contact our Wilsonville lead w/ info:
 Ted Raszka;
 advance2
 @mindspring.com



2009 - Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association is formed.

One hundred years after Tourtellotte Memorial High School first opened its massive doors to students, graduates of the school announce the formation of the Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association (TMHSAA). The TMHS Alumni Association has been created to continue the educational and philanthropic traditions established by Jacob Francis and Harriet Arnold Tourtellotte more than a century ago. The mission of the association is to maintain a solid and continuous relationship between the school and its graduates and the school through mentoring, social activities, and community involvement. Open to all graduates of Tourtellotte Memorial High School, the Association will also offer honorary memberships to local residents who have made exceptional contributions to the school and/or community.

Jacob Tourtellotte and his wife Harriet funded the design and construction of the high school and presented it to the Town of Thompson in

1909. Beginning in 1906, Harriet took an especially keen interest in all aspects of the school's site selection and construction. She strongly felt that the fourteen-acre site, now the home of TMHS, overlooking North Grosvenordale would be a perfect location for the school, and through her influence, convinced the Grosvenor-Dale Company to donate the land. The Tourtelottes also built and donated buildings to house the school's teachers and administrators and left to the town sufficient funds to operate and maintain the school for many years.

The Tourtelottes, both natives of the Town of Thompson, moved to the mid-west after the Civil War where they eventually made their fortunes. Never losing their love for the place they called home, they donated the school because of their extraordinary commitment to a free education for the young men and women of Thompson. They named the school the Tourtellotte Memorial High School, not after themselves, but in memory of their two daughters who both died in childhood.

Mrs. Tourtellotte was the daughter of a Thompson mill owner, William Arnold, a

partner in the Masonville Mills, Masonville, CT, now known as Grosvenordale, CT. When Harriet completed her grammar schooling in Thompson, her father sent her to an out-of-town high school since Thompson did not then have a public high school. She was one of the few women given the opportunity to receive a high school education at that time. She always appreciated the educational opportunity she was given and felt strongly that others should have had an equal opportunity. During a visit to Thompson in the early 1900s, she heard numerous complaints about the lack of a public high school in town, and she quickly mobilized the town to accept the responsibility for a high school if funds could be found to construct one. After some lengthy discussion, the town agreed and the deal was assembled, with the cornerstone laid December 1907.

Upon the school's completion in 1909, the Boston Globe, one of the country's largest newspapers at the time, claimed TMHS was one of the most modern schools in America, fitted with all of the amenities including one of the first purpose-built basketball courts in the country. The Tourtelottes also created a splendid museum full of family heirlooms on the second floor of the school. Mrs. Tourtellotte spent many hours in the school, personally selecting furniture, and decorating the Tourtellotte family museum. Accounts of the day all indicate that the school and her philanthropic work were her passion following the death of her husband. Mr. Tourtellotte passed away in Minnesota and never saw the school

he helped to fund. Moving back to Thompson from Minnesota, Mrs. Tourtellotte lived alone in a modest home located on Main Street in North Grosvenordale (currently the TEEG building) until she passed away. From her back window, she would get great satisfaction sitting peacefully and gazing at the magnificent school high on the hill that she and her husband helped build. Some would argue that her greatest satisfaction was in knowing that for generations young men and women from Thompson would receive a free educational opportunity they would not have received without her and her family. She went to her grave knowing that she changed the town for the better.

All alumni association members will be invited to attend an annual alumni banquet and receive a quarterly TMHS Alumni Association electronic newsletter. The newsletter will update members on major events, school activities and former graduates.

The association is now looking for members. Annual dues are \$15.00, due January 1st of every year, sent to TMHS Alumni Association, c/o Tourtellotte Memorial High School, 785 Riverside Drive, North Grosvenordale, CT 06255

Once an initial membership list is established, elections for officers will be held. Anyone interested in joining the association may call Joe Lindley 860-923-5527 or email Joe jlindley119@hotmail.com or call Deb Spinelli 860-923-2350 or Email Deb at dspinelli@thompson.ctschool.net

Text courtesy of TMHS AA

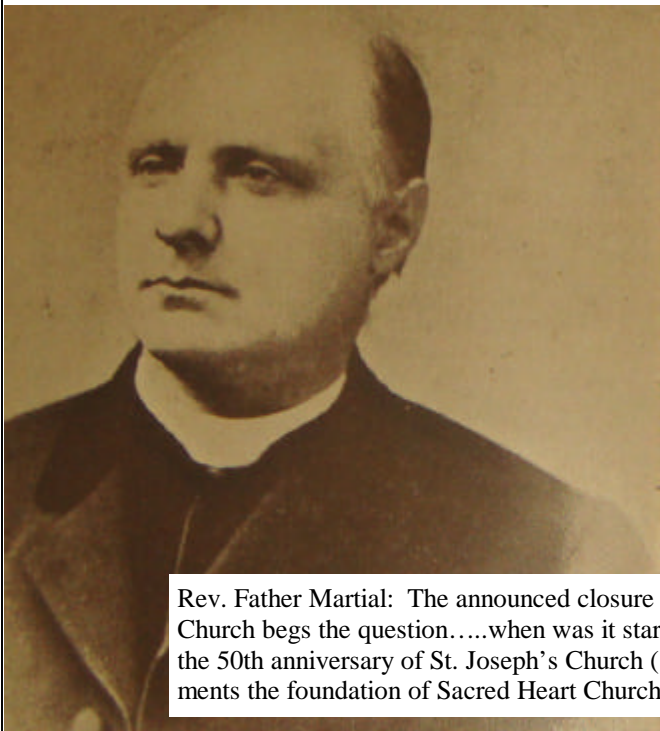


Harriet (Arnold) Tourtellotte with her daughter Hattie. Hattie is one of the two daughters that Mrs. Tourtellotte lost to illness.

In the Tourtellotte Room, Harriet's collections include collectible spoons from hotels around the world, mementos of her time in the Minnesota Territory, calling cards from the many friends who visited on 'calling' day, and exotic statues and art work.



1947 North Grosvenordale School—3rd Grade: Front Row (L-R): David Johnson, William Nizamoff, Vivian Houle, Shirley Witkowski, Virginia Tanacea, Clifford Svenning, Richard Nelson; 2nd Row: Skunder Ali, William Naum, David LaBelle,



Rev. Father Martial: The announced closure of Sacred Heart Church begs the question.....when was it started? A publication of the 50th anniversary of St. Joseph's Church (1873—1923) documents the foundation of Sacred Heart Church in West Thompson.

pointed as assistant to Rev. Haggerty de Monsi.

The Altar Society or Ladies of St. Ann was established in the parish October 16, 1872. The Sodality of the Children of Mary was founded May 31, 1873. The Brass Band, known as the Catholic Brass Band of Grosvenor-Dale, was formed and played for the first time in the church on Easter Sunday 1877. The Cadets of Temperance, under the title of the Grosvenor-Dale Catholic Union, was founded on July 7, 1878. The Society of St. John the Baptist antedates the foundation of the parish by a few months, having been founded in 1872.

During the year 1879 the Sacred Heart Church at West Thompson was erected and dedicated by Rt. Rev. Bishop McMahon. It remained a mission of Grosvenor-Dale until 1886 when it became an independent parish.

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Ask The Society

Many people have written the Thompson Historical Society looking for information on a variety of subjects. I am listing a number of these enquiries below.

Q. I am looking for information on the railroads in Thompson. Can you help?

A. Start by looking at this website: <http://www.cteastrrmuseum.org/> This group is a chapter of the National Railroad Historical Society.

Q. I am interested in learning more about some of the stone chambers and stacks discussed in the Echoes of Old Thompson book. Where do I start?

A. Subscribe to NEARA (New England Antiquities Research Association) ...www.neara.org

Q. Where do I go locally for family history research for old Thompson families?

A. We steer most people to the Killingly Historical & Genealogical Society, P.O. Box 6000, 196 Main Street, Danielson, CT 06239. Call 860-779-7250 for info

Q. How do I easily convert 35mm slides and negatives to digital JPEG files?

A. John DeBerardinis reports that a nice 35mm digital converter can be found at <http://www.thinkgeek.com/electronics/cameras/9a24/>

Q. There is a rock on Reardon Road that has letters engraved in it. What does it say?

A. It reads "Road Built 1897. G.E. Elliott, Comt'r; O. Tourtelotte; D.N. Porter; L. Logee; Selectmen."

Q. Who is Frank White & what is meant by the Thompson barn burnings?

A. In 1874, newspaperman Frank White printed a small book on a series of barn burnings in Thompson, CT.

The story is that a few folks opposed alcohol being served in the taverns in town. There were more than a few opposed to this initiative and one or two of those opposed decided to burn the barns of those looking to ban the serving of alcohol.

The book describes the legal proceedings in some detail, and exposes a side of Thompson one doesn't find in any other history book. For about 75 years, serving liquor in the town was a major issue, with the pendulum swinging both ways aggressively several times until resolved in the '30s.