

Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

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June 2012

Board of Directors

Meetings are typically held at the Thompson Library, Community Room 3, 7 pm. For 2012/13 dates, please check our website after July 30.

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Society News

Our annual meeting will be on June 19, 6 PM picnic / potluck dinner and 7 pm annual meeting at Greystone Farm on Route 21! Contact Sue Vincent if you would like to bring a dish. 860.923.5728.

Updating the Membership List: In order to provide you with current, and upcoming events, please email your active email address and phone number to: jthorstenson@charter.net.

Your email address, name and any other information you provide such as address and phone number you provide to the THS is held in strict confidence. We do not sell or share your information with anyone else.

The Thompson Historical Society is featuring the second season of our Civil War display in the Ellen Larned Museum, located on the beautiful Thompson Common. The display includes a simulated Union camp tent, uniforms, and other Civil War era artifacts. The museum is open every Saturday 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., or whenever the "Museum Open" sign is displayed!

Membership/Dues Information:

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.



Society Contact Information

President: Joe Iamartino

Vice President: Burton Rhodes

Treasurer: Susan Vincent

Secretary: Mark Snay

Directors: Karen Cole, Dave Babbitt, Rob Paton, Lynn Landry, Joe Lindley, Jon Brynga, Lucille Barrette, Blair Cole, John Rice, David Eddy

President's Quill ~ Joe Iamartino



Folks,

I received an infrared wildlife camera for my birthday. Mount it outside and it takes photos of all of those animals wandering around, day and night. So far, we've had chipmunks, squirrels, skunks, opossums, a fox, groundhogs, woodchucks, crows, deer, field rats, many birds, and other animals.

It got me to thinking about the other animals...the black bear that is roaming around Thompson Hill, the moose that was hit on Rt. 21 a few years back, the bobcat that my son Alex and I watched heading into our back field in the middle of the day last fall, the coyotes howling away in the dead of winter in the back yard, the numerous fisher cat sightings, the many otters in our streams, the beaver who keeps dropping the birch trees at my mother-in-law Shirley Houle's house off Klondike St., etc., etc.

One time, when my daughter Marissa was little, she was looking for a 'show and tell' idea. We marched out to the pond and I cut off a birch tree end that had been freshly chewed through by a beaver. About a week later, I had a very sick little girl on my hands, and no one could figure out what she had until her Uncle Larry, better known in town as *Fish-Head*, suggested she might have BEAVER-FEVER, also known as Giardia. Folks, side note...*don't drink untreated water from streams or ponds and don't touch beaver nibblings*. We learned the hard way.

A few years ago, I was fishing with Jack Maloney and my sons out on West Thompson Lake, and we saw the most magnificent bird, the water eagle, also called an osprey, which dropped into the lake and then flapped its ma-

jestic huge wings as it struggled to lift out of the lake a large fish grasped in its talons. It soared away with its catch, all of us watching with our jaws hanging at such a fascinating scene.

How about the size of the carp in the French River? Would you believe 4 feet long, maybe bigger! Several folks have told me that they've seen a cougar in the Quaddick area. My neighbors, the Dustins, have been telling me about the many birds in the area now. I can personally vouch for the resurgence in the number of blue birds. Ten years ago, I never saw any. Now, I see them in groups of 5 and 10 regularly in my backyard.

I have to put my pool umbrellas away at night in the summer. The last time I left them out, I came out to the umbrellas being loaded with sleeping bats. In the winter, our old house has visitors. This year, our traps took out the usual mice and unusually a vole, or so said my son Chris who identified the critter. The snakes warming on the rocks, the long salamander with the shortest legs I have ever seen that crawled into my house scaring my wife half to death thinking it was a snake. The tree frogs peeping so loudly that they keep us up at night. The toads, the turtles....especially the one that crawled into Shirley's lawn, dug up the garden and planted her many white eggs.

This year, we had a male and female duck land by our swimming pool and they left us a single white egg as a gift. But the best of all happened at a recent fishing event at Valley Springs Sportsman's Club (see related photo, pg. 5). I am sitting in a chair with family watching my son Alex fish. Off in the distance we see two geese swimming toward us with 4 fluffy yellow goslings all in row. All of those fishing respec-

tively held their casting until the little fleet sailed through, with their mission to train the little ones how to paddle. When the goslings grew tired, the two big geese started honking and the fleet headed for shore. The 4 goslings stumbled and bumbled their way out of the water, pecked for worms and bugs for 3-4 minutes, and with their bellies full, they were quacked back into the water. The fleet sailed back to their home port and our fishing continued.

I thought about that little encounter today and how respectful all of the people were to that little goose family. Now, I am sure people might say how unpleasant it was to the fish being caught by those hooks. I am sure that osprey's talons didn't feel too wonderful to that large bass that was air freighted to become that osprey's next meal. In any case, I am not judging how one obtains their meal. But showing respect to our environment and to the animals that share Thompson with us gives me great hope. There was a time when I saw few animals. Today, I see many and I like it. Those old railroad trails have become green highways for our wildlife. Better planning practices create more open space while still allowing development. Clean-water groups work tirelessly to pull tires and trash out of our waterways while dumping laws stopped the nasty practices of the past. How many stories I've heard of the French River colored green or orange or red depending on the dyes being used in Webster at the mills. All a thing of the past today and our wildlife is a reflection of this positive change. This is history too.

~J. Iamartino

N. Grosvenordale Trolley



*This is the trolley on its daily run photographed as it passed through North Grosvenordale.
Thank you to THS treasurer, Sue Vincent, who was able to purchase this rare image via
eBay after some stiff bidding!*

THOMPSON AND THE CIVIL WAR

Over the past several months, there has been renewed interest in Thompson's role in the Civil War. The Civil War Monument, located across from the Ellen Larned Library, shows the names of 238 Thompson men who fought in the war. Further investigation suggest that number may have been as high as 252, a remarkable number when considering our population at that time.

Thompson has had several notables to include Medal of Honor winner Lt. William Sully Beebe, Major General George Davis, Dr. John McGregor and General John Eaton Tourtellotte.

General Tourtellotte served as a company and regiment commander with the 4th Minnesota Infantry. He later became a brigade commander. The 4th MN distinguished itself in 13 major battles in the Western Theater of operations to include the Battle of Vicksburg, Allatoona Pass, and Sherman's March to the Sea.



Above: Colonel John Tourtellotte U.S.A during his time as Sherman's aide-de-camp. (Thompson's Tourtellottes)

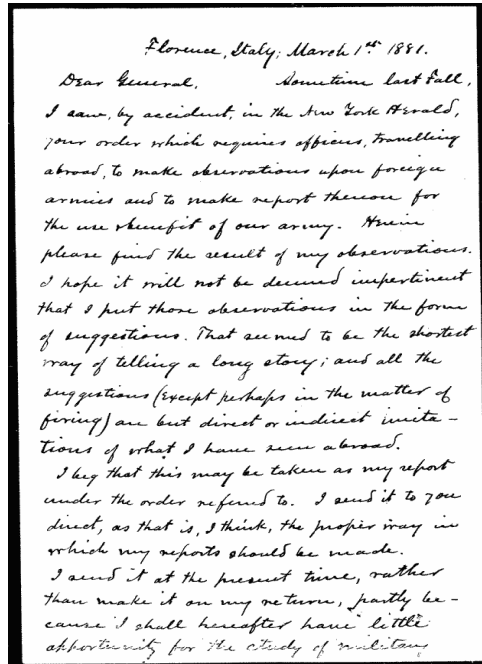
Tourtellotte was in command of an augmented unit of approximately 1,000 men when he heroically defended critical supplies at Allatoona Pass, GA in October 1864. During the 6-hour battle more than 1,500 men were wounded or killed—that's one man every 10 seconds. Tourtellotte himself was severely wounded, shot through the hips, but maintained his command until the end of the

battle. For his brilliant defense of Allatoona Pass and his unparalleled bravery, General William T. Sherman later wrote that Tourtellotte had earned his "everlasting respect."

After the war Sherman asked Tourtellotte to return to the Army. He served for another 18 years, mainly as Sherman's aide-de-camp, and finally as Sherman's Chief of Staff. He is credited with assisting Sherman in writing his memoirs. The book is considered one of the most important pieces written about the Civil War.

Sherman and Tourtellotte became, and remained, good friends until their deaths in 1891. Tourtellotte retired from the service in 1884, one year after his

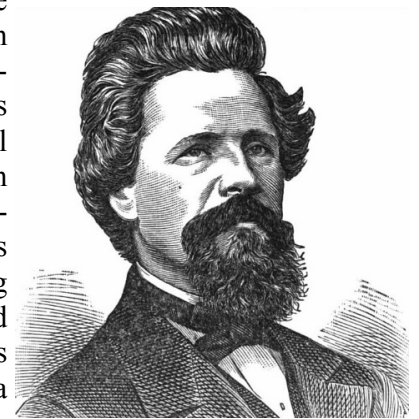
boss. The military careers of both General Tourtellotte U.S.A., and his brother Dr. Francis Jacob Tourtellotte U.S.N., benefactor of the Tourtellotte Memorial High School are chronicled in the soon to be



Left: One of the many Tourtellotte-Sherman letters. Recent research has uncovered more than fifty letters between the two friends. This particular letter is from Tourtellotte to Sherman during an 1881 trip to Florence, Italy. Transcription of the entire letter can be found in Thompson's Tourtellottes and the Civil War.

published book *Thompson's Tourtellottes and the Civil War* by THS Director, J. Lindley

Dr. John McGregor was one of Thompson's first soldiers to enlist. He gained notoriety when his unit, the 3rd Connecticut Infantry, was badly mauled at Bull Run. When Union troops withdrew, he refused to leave his wounded and dying men. He was captured by Confederate soldiers on July 21, 1861. As a prisoner of war, he was badly treated and nearly starved to death.



Above: Dr. John McGregor (Life and Deeds of Dr. John McGregor)

He was eventually paroled and returned to Thompson, to a hero's welcome. Because of his sense of duty as a doctor and the fact that he was one of the first prisoners taken in the war, he was made a national figure.

~Article courtesy of Joe Lindley

Newsworthy

The **Old Town Hall** restoration work continues. **Ron Doros** completed the repair work on the bell tower, including new sheathing and shingles, **Lou Lane** has volunteered to work on the shutters, and **Dan Cording's** company is painting and working on the window re-glazing. When completed, except for some work on the interior floor, this will conclude the restoration work for this generation of THS volunteers. It will be up to the next generation to carry the ball from here...!



And here is a picture of the geese and goslings Joe mentioned in the Quill!

Over at the **Larned Museum**, a dedicated crew led by **Mark Snay** has been diligently working at cataloguing and filming our collections for entry into our *Past Perfect* system. Ultimately this summer, we will end up with online web viewing capabilities. Many thanks to Mark, Kathy, Cindy, Sue, Jon, Burt, John R., David E., and others, who have helped out. Special thanks to **Lis Burton**, **Joe Lindley**, and the **TMHSAA volunteers** for the work at the TMHS Memorial Room that will also be included in the online web viewing effort.

The War of 1812: This year marks the 200th anniversary of the conflict fought between the forces of the United States and those of the British Empire! This fall we will have some information on Thompson's involvement in the war effort.

Bottom left: Thank you to Larry Conant who shared this article with us regarding the 'Thompson House' that was moved from Thompson to Bass Rock, MA. The date of the *Boston Herald* is January 15, 1936. Larry's grandfather, Harry Conant, restored and moved post and beam houses all over New England including this one.



Above: A Grube Photo showing the start of additions to TMHS 1959. We have more photos to share in the future. The **TMHS Alumni Association Banquet** is scheduled for June 16, you can find more information regarding the program and tickets at: http://thompsonpublicschools.org/TMHSAA/newsletters_12/May_June.pdf

From the archives of the Webster Times, Memorial Day, 1883

Volume XXV # 4

Webster Times

June 11, 1883

NEW BOSTON

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, etc., 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 gratefully 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 eulogizing 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, etc., 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.

World War II Author Visits Thompson

The Thompson Historical Society recently sponsored a visit by New York Times Best Selling Author Alex Kershaw. Kershaw's book *The Few* chronicles the lives of seven American pilots who violated United States Neutrality laws



Above: Best Selling Author Alex Kershaw

risking imprisonment and losing their American citizenship to become part of an elite group of RAF fighter pilots who saved Britain during WWII during the Battle of Britain.

One of *The Few* was Thompson's Andy Mamedoff. Mamedoff, the son of a White Russian, was forced to flee Russia in the 1920's after the Russian Revolution. His uncle, "Count" Anastase Vonsiatsky met and married, Marion, the daughter of

Norman Reams, one of America's, and Thompson's, wealthiest men.

Kershaw's visit to Thompson began with a presentation about *The Few* to the students and staff of Tourtellotte Memorial High School. Mamedoff was a student at Tourtellotte during the 1930's, but was expelled, most likely due to his rambunctious nature and free spirit, qualities highly desirable in a fighter pilot.

After the presentation, Kershaw toured the TMHS 1909 building, Mamedoff's old school, and the Tourtellotte Memorial Room. From there he visited Mamedoff's former childhood home, the Russian Tea Bear, located on Route 21 not far from Quinnatisset Country Club. The Russian Tea Bear is now owned by Linda and Frank Desautel. Linda gave Kershaw, THS president - Joe Iamartino, and THS members Ron Tillen, Charlie Seney, and Joe Lindley a detailed tour of her very historic home.



Above: The New York Times Best Selling book *The Few* by Alex Kershaw. A key character in this book is Thompson's Andy Mamedoff.

The English born Kershaw has penned a number of WWII books to include *The Bedford Boys*, *The Envoy*, *The Longest Winter*, *Blood and Champagne*, and *Escape From The Deep*. Kershaw told the students of Tourtellotte that part of his motivation for writing about the war was to counter comments he used to hear as a young man; that Americans were fighting for American freedom. "I tell Europeans that Americans were not fighting for their freedom, they were fighting for ours! There was no chance Hitler was going to invade America." By the end of the war more than 400,000 Americans made the ultimate sacrifice.

According to several THS members, the most incredible part of the day was listening to Alex Kershaw, one of today's most prolific WWII authors, discussing the war with WWII veteran Charlie Seney. According to Joe Iamartino, "This was an incredible way to cap off a great day."

Right: RAF fighter pilot Andrew Mamedoff of Thompson, Connecticut. Andy was the first American Flight Leader in the British Air Force and is one of the key characters in the book *The Few*. Andy was one of the few Americans who fought in the Battle for Britain. Below: Andy inspects "his badly holed plane after almost being shot down on August 24, 1940 (Kershaw).



The Thompson Historical Society
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📧 Graduate student seeks information, re: George W. Shaw. Anyone with information is invited to email Joe Iamartino who will forward your answers to Ms. Silva. Thank you!

Dear Sir, My name's Ana and I'm a graduate student at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion. My graduate studies focus on the history of musical instrument specialization and I'm working in the local National Music Museum (NMM). At the moment, I'm working on a research paper about decorative arts applied in musical instruments.

The NMM holds in its collection a keyed bugle made by George W. Shaw, from Thompson, CT., ca. 1845-50. This person was a well-known worker of tortoise shell pieces in your town, but I wasn't able, so far, to trace any other of his works beside this keyed bugle, which holds a US patent.

I decided to contact you in order to find out more information about Mr. Shaw, his work, and if possible, other extant examples of his works. Can you help me?



With the recent release of the Tim Burton, Johnny Depp remake of the beloved TV series *Dark Shadows*, the question remains: "Was Thornfield Hall used for the exterior shots for the TV series?" Dolores Kneeland wrote the THS with this question and told us that searching for the answer is great fun for her and a friend! Our Winter 2003 newsletter (please access through our website), ran a photo of the Hall identifying it as the house from *Dark Shadows*. The search for the real exterior shots of "Collinwood Manor" in the TV series continues, however, Joe Iamartino believes it is unlikely to be Thornfield Hall.

There are two interesting websites both alluding to the truth of the manor:

<http://meganmcgory.com/pages/ds/thornfieldhall.html> and
<http://www.hudsonvalleyruins.org/yasinsac/spratt/spratt.html> both feature wonderful old pictures of the houses in their glory days. Keep searching Dolores!

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