

Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

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March 2011

Calendar of Events:

The next Board of Directors

Meeting will be held at the Library, Community Room 3, 7 pm on **April 19, 2011**

Annual Society Meeting/

Picnic: June 2, 2011,

Location: Greystone Farm, Route 21, Thompson

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Upcoming Events

The Thompson Museum at the Larned Building: The reopening of the **Civil War Exhibit** begins the first Sat. in May, 5/7. See Civil War re-enactors on the Common and a talk about the Merrimac and Monitor battle.

Please join us 11 am - 4 pm. After the reopening, the museum will be open every Sat. from 1 to 4 pm through the end of July.

A presentation on the **Norman Bruce Ream Estate (now Marianapolis Preparatory School)** will include background on Mr. Ream and his friendship with former Thompson resident Mr. John W. Doane. The talk will

also include how the Ream mansion was transitioned to become the private school it is today. Please check our website for further details.



Mr. & Mrs. N.B. Ream, Circa 1900

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 to Jun 30.)

Members are encouraged to bring their dues up-to-date as the income generated by membership contributes greatly to the continued operation of the Society.

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.

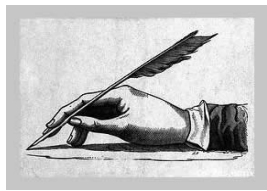
Society Contact Information

President: Joe Iamartino
Vice President: Burton Rhodes
Treasurer: Susan Vincent
Secretary: Mark Snay
Curator: Joe Iamartino
Photos: Mark Snay
Website: Blair Cole
Newsletter: JoAnn Thorstenson
(please feel free to send suggestions/corrections to jthorstenson@charter.net).
Museum Shop: Lucille Barrette, Helen Flood, Henrietta Panu, Kiku Anderson, June Schoppe, Sue Vincent, Lisa Reinholdsten

Many of the items from our Gift Shop will be available at the THS Museum in the Larned Building for the summer. The gift shop offers Thompson themed books, maps, artwork, local items of interest and more. Please consider a visit!

President's Quill

Joe Jamartino



When I was younger, there appeared to be so many years in front of me to do all of the things I wanted to do. Now, with a half of century of mostly wonderful and a few not-so-wonderful experiences behind me, I find myself crossing out many of the 'to do' items that are left on my list. What was so important years ago have dropped off the map. I used to buy every hit song from my favorite bands, knew the name of each musician in the bands. Today, I listen to the radio but know few of the songs, and even less about the artists themselves. Football, I had to have every Topps football card for the NY Giants team and knew the stats of the players, watched every game. Now, I barely know the name of the running backs and miss half the games. Guitar, piano, drums....I had to have the best equipment. I couldn't wait to play my newest bass guitar. Haven't touched any of them for many months. Maybe years. Playing baseball. Do I even own a mitt anymore? I don't know. So, what changed?

What was important then has changed because I changed. It was all about me those many years ago. Today, it is about my family, my community and my friends. I am no saint as those around me will attest but I have learned something over my 50 years - that I am part of an ever-changing world, and I am changing with it. I was born before there was a single laptop computer, internet connection, microwave oven, Blackberry, iPad, hybrid electric car, HDTV. I am a child of the Cold War, born before Vietnam. My country believed its leaders then. Did that change? Or are we better now for demanding the truth from them?

My parents, grandparents - so in control. Now, gone or failing. Who is running things now? Me and my generation. So what are my 'to do' items now? Paying my taxes and bills, taking care of grandma at her retirement home, voting for the party that will do the best job with fixing healthcare and cutting the cost of government, stepping up and volunteering when no one else will do it. Making things better for my children. Picking the right person for a key job. Helping people to remember their hometown. Painting the house. Convincing a woman who can't pay her bills to find a better job and proving to her that she can do it if she tries. Telling others that the economy will change for the better and really believing it. Proving that America's best days are still to come. Getting my daughter to take practice SAT tests.and playing drums on "New York, New York" and "Back in Black".

~Joe Jamartino

Newsorthy

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

24 July 1877—Jewett City

Dr. James C. Lathrop died of consumption at the residence of his father at Hopeville, on Wednesday morning of last week. He was 27 years of age. Dr. Lathrop commenced the practice of medicine at North Grosvenordale, Conn., only a few years ago. He had built up an extensive practice in that locality, and had become deservedly popular in his profession, his pleasant and social disposition winning him many friends. For some time past he has been at his father's house, where everything possible has been done by his parents, wife, brothers and sister to make his life pleasant as it slowly ebbed away. It was a pathetic incident that his wife gave birth to a healthy boy the evening before he died. He had expressed a desire to see the little stranger that was expected, and this pleasure was granted him. May God bless and care for the widow and fatherless. The funeral services were held in the Congregational church last Friday p.m. at 2 o'clock. The Rev. G. Newell Kellogg preached the sermon, after which the Rev. T. L. Shipman made appropriate remarks. A very large audience gathered at the church, many friends from No. Grosvenordale and Danielsonville being present. Although we feel sad to see one just entering upon the duties of life so early called away, yet we are comforted with the thought that he died the possessor of a well-grounded hope in Christ.

Remember to check out our website from time to time for archived newsletters, *Echoes of Old Thompson* errata (corrections), volunteer opportunities and so much more!



*The following is a partial listing of properties (in no particular order) that have been submitted for our growing list of **Most Important Historic Properties of Thompson**. Please feel free to forward comments / further suggestions on more Thompson properties to Joe Iamartino.*

1. William Mason House - Thompson Hill
2. 1826 Masonvill(e) Mill Building
3. 1862 Grosvenor-Dale Building tower & gate house
4. 1872 Grosvenor-Dale Mill
5. 3 Rows & Greek Village
6. Wilsonville Mill
7. East Thompson Stone Chamber
8. Vernon Stiles Inn
9. Former Sacred Heart Church
10. St Joseph Church
11. Thompson Congregational Church
12. Current Vercelli House (old Nichols store)
13. Keegan Home Wilsonville
14. Academy Building - Paine House - Thompson Hill
15. Current Williams home & barn (formerly Chandler home)
16. Pepin's General Store - Fabyan
17. St Stephen Church - Quinebaug
18. Old Town Hall - Thompson
19. Former Mill Store and Jail - North Grosvenordale
20. Ellen Larned Memorial Building - Old Library
21. Old Watson House - Thompson Hill
22. Linehouse Tavern
23. Greystone Farm
24. Old Ballard Farm (Converse site)
25. Mechanicsville School
26. Paine District School
27. Upham School
28. Thompson Speedway
29. Jacob's Tavern - E. Thompson
30. Masonic Hall - Old Thompson Hill School
31. American Legion Hall - Grosvenordale
32. VFW Building - Old Fabyan School
33. Quinebaug Fire Dept building - original building
34. Kenney's Store, Mechanicsville
35. French River Inn, Mechanicsville
36. Thompson Bank (Old Sturbridge Village)
37. Thompson Hill Fire Engine Company
38. Tourtellotte Memorial High School
39. Watson Home (former Godfrey Home)
40. Pompeo Barn
41. East Thompson Lithic Stone Chamber

For the full listing, please visit our website at www.thompsonhistorical.org. Thank you!

Help Wanted!

Former Thompson resident, Don LaBonte, wrote the Society with the following question:

🔧 My father was fire chief of the **East Thompson FD**. As a little boy I remember playing/riding on the 1918 American LaFrance fire truck. It was an open cab with a crank siren which my Dad let me crank once in a while. There used to be a picture of him driving the truck in a parade hanging on the wall of the station. The truck was in service until sold to a fire museum sometime around 1965. My Dad says the Worcester paper did a story on it. I have been trying to locate the truck. I wonder if you have any records that would help in my locating the truck.

🔧 Does anyone have any information that might help Mr. LaBonte locate this truck? Please contact Joe Iamartino, contact information below.

Mr. Ron Field of Plum Tree Cottage, Hazleton, Cheltenham, UK wrote the Society for help in locating photos of CT Union volunteers of 1861:

🔧 I am a British historian, and Fellow of the **Company of Military Historians** based in Washington, D.C. I am writing a book about the Union volunteers of 1861. In my chapter on CT volunteers, I am hoping to illustrate my work with photos of enlisted men from CT regiments wearing the uniforms they might have been issued with during that year. I am hopeful that you may have such photos or might be able to put me in touch with those who have. Thank you for your time.

Note: The Company of Military Historians was founded in 1949; further information on this organization can be found at: www.military-historians.org.

🔧 Anyone with any information or photos that might help Mr. Field is encouraged to contact Joe Iamartino, contact information below.

THS Contact info: email: jiamartino@charter.net

Sharing Recent Correspondence and Helpful Information

Mr. Bill Warner, local grave researcher, has provided the Society with information on findagrave.com. **Find A Grave** is a website providing access and input to an online database of cemetery records.

If you are interested in searching for a particular cemetery or gravestone(s) try their site at:

www.findagrave.com

Mr. William Kostlevy, Associate Professor of History and Political Science at Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas sent the following email to the Society:

"I am the author of a recent book on a Wisconsin-based communal society, the Metropolitan Church Association. One of its key organizers was Connecticut Mill supervisor, F.M. Messenger, who has been featured in your newsletter. The book is entitled *Holy Jumpers; Evangelicals and Radicals in Progressive Era America*, Oxford University Press, 2010." For more information, please visit Amazon.com.

A recent find by Mark Snay: Mr. Messenger was also an avid art collector. You can view some pieces at:

<http://www.mmdnewswire.com/messenger-art-collection-albert-babbitt-25699.html>

Former Thompson resident, author Norman Macht, wrote a book on the Yale team that was the last football team with 11 players who played both ways (offense & defense). The Yale team defeated the powerhouse Princeton team in a stunning upset in 1934. In those days, the Ivy League was still a major force in collegiate athletics nationwide.

Please visit: http://articles.courant.com/2010-11-12/features/hc-yale-princeton-qa-20101112_1_yale-team-harvard-game-princeton.

The National Archives & Records Administration announced that 5.2 million passenger records relating to the immigrants arriving at Baltimore, Boston, New Orleans, NY and PA ports in the great migration period, typically after 1840 are available for viewing.

There are also many other US Government archival documents at the following website:

<http://aad.archives.gov/aad/>.

The Library of Congress continues to add to its immense online digital books and documents collection. Visit these three sites to see what is now available:

- ♦ www.loc.gov
- ♦ www.myloc.gov
- ♦ www.archive.org

As the Library of Congress says "...travel is no longer a restriction when it comes to access the material in the Library of Congress."

The Veterans History Project was created in 2000 when the US Congress voted to preserve and archive taped interviews, photographs and documents from the veterans of WWI, WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War and the Iraq/Afghan Conflict.

The stories are accessible to the public at: www.ccsu.edu/vhp. Or you can call 860-832-2976 for more information.

Mr. Jay Young wrote to the Society with information about a new website containing historical information about 6,234 CT residents who died in the line of duty during and since WWII.

My Fallen Soldiers is an effort to discover, preserve and promote the stories of sacrifice made by US soldiers. Visitors share information to existing profiles that helps create this valuable historic record. This is an active project with profiles of approx. 160,000 soldiers who served since 1940 from about 10 states.

Mr. Young is a freelance journalist from Altoona, PA with a BA in history from Bowling Green State Univ., OH.

If you are interested in reviewing or providing information to Mr. Young, the website is: www.myfallensoldiers.com.

*Mystery! Need to find info on Lieutenant Colonel John Silva
WWII Pilot - Born in Thompson*

In our December 2010 newsletter we dedicated a page to Ron Tillen's presentation on WWII aviators (Nov. 2010) and explained that more Thompson aviators are being researched. Here we add another story and ask for any assistance readers may be able to provide. If you do have any information, please contact Joe Iamartino, contact info below.

Ms. Susan Zimmerman of St. Louis, Missouri, is writing an article for a WWII magazine. She recently contacted the Society with a request for further memories of Lt. Col. John Silva, born in Thompson. Ms. Zimmerman is also trying to locate Col. Silva's son Fernando. She forwarded a clipping (excerpt inserted) and a link to a website with the story "*Behind the Scenes of the Doolittle Raid*" by Fernando Silva (<http://www.jimmydoolittlemuseum.org/html/raid.html>).

This is a fascinating story of a Thompson native who may be the famous pilot who first proved that US bombers could make long range flights by his considerably challenging flight from CA to IN in 1942, prior to the Doolittle Raid. His son Fernando gives an engaging account of his father's "surprise" mission and his contribution to the Raid's ultimate success.

**Colonel Silva
Is Reassigned
To PACD Post**

Andrews AFB, Md. — Lt. Col. John J. Silva, Commander of the 42d Air Transport Sq. since March 1953 and through its difficult organizational and training period, is moving up to the position of Transport Operations Officer for Pacific Division. He leaves for his new station at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, sometime during September.

A Faithful Daughter—Webster Times, August 27, 1872

An incident occurred in the neighboring town of Thompson Ct., one day last week, which exhibited striking affection and heroism in a daughter towards her mother, such as is refreshing to hear of in these modern days. It was after a heavy rain and the roads were somewhat flooded. An old lady aged about seventy, and her daughter of about twenty five were walking along the highway on their way to the funeral of a deceased friend, when they came to a place where the road was overflowed for a distance of about ten rods ahead, and to the depth of two feet in some places. The two were very anxious to reach their destination, but when they saw the road thus flooded and apparently impassible, the old lady was overcome with grief and sat down by the roadside and cried.

At this juncture our informant appeared, and witnessed the result. The daughter was troubled at the distress and disappointment of her poor old mother, and she quietly removed her shoes and stockings from her feet, and then took her mother upon her back and steadily carried her through the water the entire distance, and put her down on the other side, after which they went on their way. Considering the uncertainty of fording such an extent of water, where there might be holes to fall into, and the great labor of carrying such a burden by a young girl, it was certainly an instance of filial affection that is rarely seen in this age of weakness and selfishness.

The William A. Johnson Organ, Opus 409, at the Congregational Church

Courtesy of Susan Markham, Organist at the TCC and a member of the American Guild of Organists.

The William A. Johnson Organ was built by William A. Johnson Organ Co. of Westfield, MA in 1873. It was originally installed in the State Street Methodist Church, now the Wesley United Methodist Church, in Springfield, MA. For now unknown reasons, the church in Springfield decided to sell the organ in the late 1800s. The Doane family, who were members of Thompson Congregational Church (TCC), heard about the availability of the Johnson Organ and purchased it for the church. It was dismantled and brought to Thompson. It was 1900 by the time the installation was complete. The organ provided many years of beautiful music but was in need of restoring by the 1980s. It was rebuilt in 1986 by the Andover Organ Co. of Massachusetts. Unfortunately, the church steeple caught fire in 1986 and the thousands of gallons of water used to put out the fire poured down through the organ chambers. Andover Organ Co. was again contacted and the entire organ had to be removed and put into unheated storage to allow it to dry out naturally. During this procedure, the Andover Co. discovered that the wooden casework, which was painted white, was actually solid cherry wood underneath. The committee decided to have the woodwork restored to its natural finish which remains to this day. The woodwork is also accented with black walnut. During the restoration, Andover contacted the committee with information that they were presently dismantling a Johnson Organ and would have available a rank of Cornopeon pipes. They said that our organ originally had such a rank but they had been replaced at some unknown time and had been replaced with an inferior rank called a Vox Humana. The Vox never held its tuning very well and was eventually removed. The Organ Committee gave the Andover Co. permission to purchase the Cornopeon for installation at a later date. Until now, this has not been done.

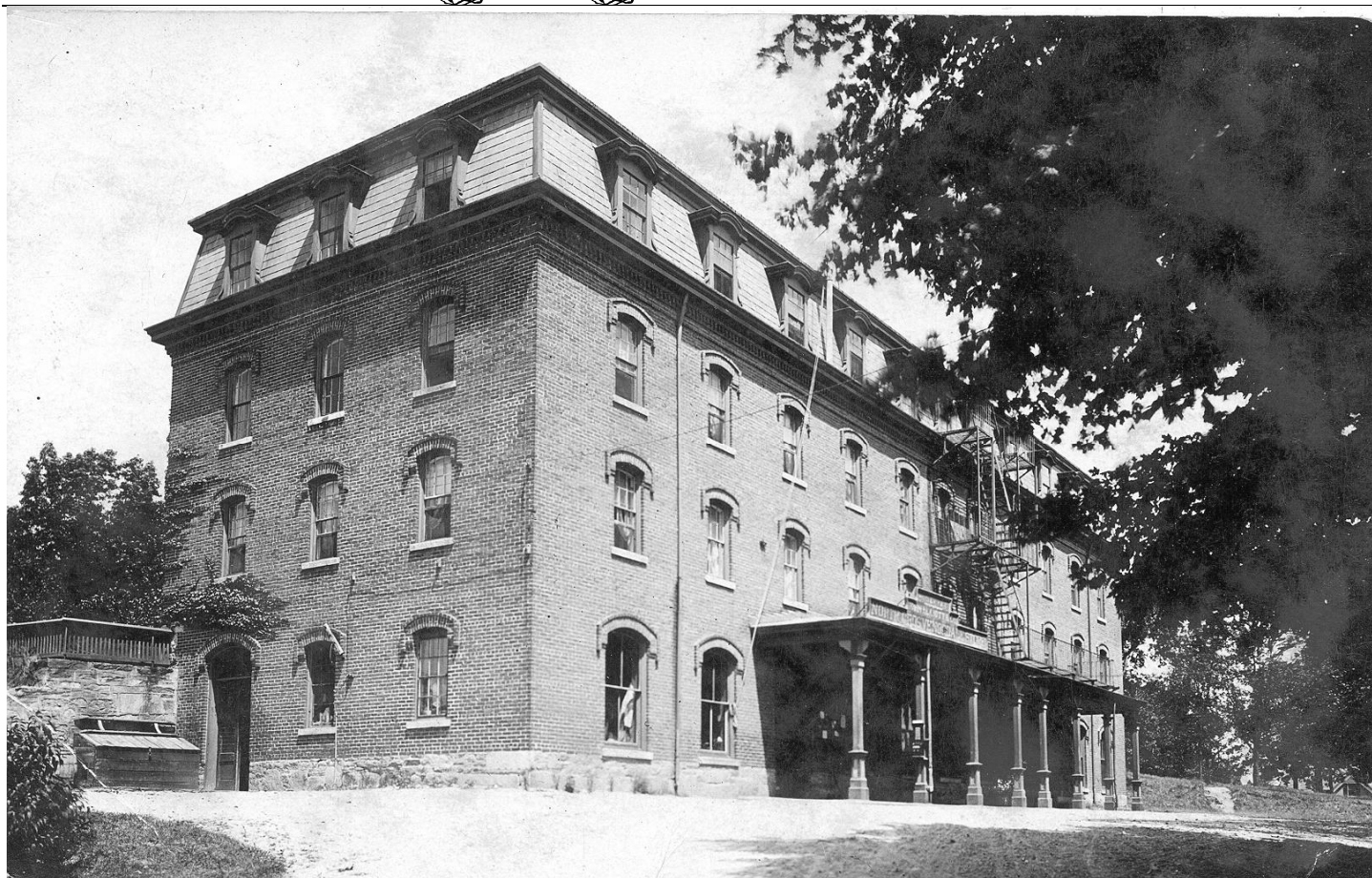
After becoming the organist at TCC one year ago, I became very interested at the prospect of having this rank of pipes installed. The President of Andover Organ informed me that they still had the Cornopeon pipes and would be happy to give us an updated estimate for the installation. A new organ fund has been started and we have raised about half of the necessary money. In order to complete this undertaking, Ted Reynolds has graciously offered his talent to us by giving a concert on May 1, 2011 at 3:00 p.m. We hope that many of Thompson's residents will be in attendance. Hopefully, this concert will put us over the top and will allow us to have the new rank installed. This will return the Johnson Organ to its original state at which time we will apply for a Citation from the Organ Historical Society.



The Thompson Congregational Church Organ Restoration Committee is also raising funds by "selling" pipes in a campaign called "Pipe Dreams."

A monetary amount has been assigned to each of the 58 pipes in the Cornopeon rank. Contact Blair Cole at blair@blairmedia.tv for more information.

The Town Jail and John Elliott's General Store



The THS was asked if there was ever a jail located in Thompson. After some research, Joe Iamartino reports:

The jail was in the same building as **John Elliott's General Store**. The sign on the building reads "John Elliot North Grosvenordale Store." Elliott also ran his home delivery of groceries via horse-drawn wagon, from this building.





The Thompson Historical Society
P.O. Box 47
Thompson, CT 06277
www.thompsonhistorical.org
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What a winter (2010-11) we had! The roof of the workshop on the left gave way under the weight of the snow this winter. It was once part of the A.U. Elliott Company which was a blacksmith and wagon business on Buckley Hill Road. Welcome Spring!



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