
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

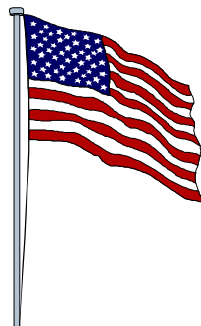
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REVIEW OF GROTON, VERMONT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This is the third in a planned series of articles on Groton in the twentieth century. The third decade - the 'twenties' - from 1920 through 1929 is gleaned mainly from The Groton Town Reports and Mr. Glover's Groton published by the Society. The editor



TWENTIETH CENTURY GROTON The Third Decade 1920 - 1929

GOD BLESS AMERICA

OFFICERS

President	Richard Brooks
Vice President	Norma Hosmer
Secretary	Diane Kreis
Treasurer	Joan Haskell

The population of Groton reported in the 1920 census was 915.

The influenza epidemic that was rampant after World War I, continued in Groton in the 1920's. The District Health Officer, Clarence H. Burr M. D., reported in the 1921 Town Report that "Probably no other town in the State during the last year was affected with influenza more than was Groton; in many instances whole families were down with the disease; and coming at a time when the roads were drifted and nearly impassable, from the heaviest snowstorm of the season, made it difficult to render relief in many instances. Volunteer physicians from Montpelier and Barre assisted Dr. Eastman, during the

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

December 16, 2001
2 to 4 P.M.

MEETING SCHEDULE

(second Tuesday)
March through November
10 AM at the
Peter Paul House, 253 Scott Hwy.

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emergency, and with the town officials the situation was met in the most able manner." There were 129 communicable diseases reported in 1920, including 88 cases of influenza, 19 chicken pox, 16 measles, 5 mumps and one case of Typhoid fever. Homes with communicable diseases were quarantined by posting signs to warn visitors not to enter, in an effort to halt or slow the spread of the disease.

Town officers in the 1920's were: selectmen; Grant M. Vance 8 years, Isaac N. Hall 5, James W. Main 5, Robert J. Miller 3, Orange H. Welch 3, Stephen N. Welch 3, George C. Whitehill 2, and Carl Vance one year. Town Clerks were Franklin M. Page 1920-23, Morris D. Coffrin 1924-28, and P. A. Smith 1929. Treasurers were Ernest F. Clark 1920 -22, Amasa L. Hooper 1923, George N. Clark 1924-27, and John Benzie 1928-29. Road Commissioners were George S. Welch 2 years, Calvin Darling 7, and Robert L. Heath one year. Overseers of the Poor were H. M. Ricker and James W. Main; and librarians were Mrs. N. A. Hadlock and Mrs. J. B. Renfrew.

The twenties were referred to by many as the "Roaring Twenties". The 'war to end all wars' was over and it was time to get back to enjoying life. Automobiles were becoming more commonplace and required better roads. Payments for 'rolling roads' were last recorded in 1927 to Harold Darling, J. H. Welch, Edmund Welch, and Malcolm Graham. Afterwards, roads that were kept open in the winter were presumably plowed. James Benzie built a snowflyer in the early 20's to use in delivering the mail. He attached an idler axle to the mid frame of a model T Ford for half-tracks powered by the rear wheels

and replaced the front wheels with a pair of skis. The snowflyer worked well as long as the roads were 'rolled' to pack the snow. When the roads were plowed he removed the skis and replaced the wheels. The half-tracks were also removed when the roads were paved in the late 20's, to prevent damaging the road surface, but the model T with it's high clearance worked well on the back roads in the spring during "mud season".

Groton High School which was reopened after WWI in 1919 had its first graduating class in 1923. Nine students graduated: Crawford Adams, Edmund Carter, Ross Clark, Alice Dunn, Cyrus Eastman, Hazel Johnson, Dorothy Miller, Donald Morrison, and Milton Ricker. Five students graduated in 1924: Kenneth Bailey, Franklin Clark, Della Frost, Rufus Hosmer, and Raymond Ricker. Seven in 1925: Earl "Bart" Eastman, Donald Fifield, John French, Hattie Hood, Wendall McLam, Edmund Secchari, and Clarence Welch. Nine in 1926: Adeline Daniels, Annabelle Dunn, James Main, Donald Miller, Duncan Miller, Raymond Page, Lynwood Welch, Beatrice Welch, and Joanna Welch. Seven in 1927: Florence Carbee, Carlos Dunn, Martha Emery, Bessie Frost, Lloyd Hosmer, Nellie Welch, and Mary Wilson. Twelve in 1928: Lawrence Blanchard, Lyman Blanchard, Lee Fifield, Fremont Fiske, Kermit Hood, Mildred Hood, Thelma Johnson, Orabella Main, John Page, Richard Pillsbury, Irma Renfrew, and Harry Welch. And twelve in 1929: Albertine Boomhower, Margaret Blanchard, Ruby Clark, Wendall Crown, Seth Eastman, Vern Frost, Emma James, John Peterson, Alice Ricker, Stanley Taisey, Austin Welch, and Gertrude

Welch. A total of 61 students graduated from Groton High School in the 1920's.

School Board Directors in the 1920's were; A. H. Tellier and Elmer J. Carpenter 5 years, O. C. Frost, Emma H. Robinson, S. N. Welch, Addie E. Ricker, and Jackson Jones 3 years, G. H. Millis and B. L. Brown 2 years, and Helene White one year. Three directors served each year. In 1920 there were 199 students enrolled in Groton schools at an average cost per pupil of \$42.57. Enrollment increased gradually and reached 249 by the end of the decade. Costs also increased averaging \$65.59 per pupil. The school superintendant was Leonard D. Smith 1920-22, E. S. Boyd 1922-23, Nelson J. Whitehill 1923-24, and J. Stewart Garvin 1924-30. In 1929 the High School had 75 pupils, the grammar school had 27, intermediate 19, second primary 35, and primary 22. Other schools in town were Westville with 30 pupils, South with 13, and Plummer with 9. The Welch school closed after the 1927-28 school year. The school superintendant reported in the 1924 Town Report that the Groton School Board "... had pursued the wise course of employing only trained teachers in these schools...". He also reported in 1929 that "The Bible is being read and some good work along the line of Bible instruction and character education is being given." A total of 54 teachers were employed in Groton schools in the 1920's. (see page 6 for list of teachers). Only 12 of these teachers taught more than 3 years in the Groton schools. This turnover of teachers required the hiring of up to nine new teachers some years in the 1920's.

A major flood occurred on November 3, 1927. October rainfall was

50 percent above normal so the ground was saturated when 8 inches of rain fell in a 45 hour period starting on November 2. The Governor, John E. Weeks, wrote that this flood was the greatest disaster in the history of our beautiful state. Fertile farmlands were ruined, transportation lines in some areas were completely demoralized and many businesses were wiped out. It was indeed a hopeless situation to meet, with winter hovering in the offing.

Some major fires in Groton in the 20's were the Coffrin Opera Block which burned in March 1925; the Turning Works in July 1926; and Charlie Rickers farm in May 1929.

Groton Grange 443 held its first Community Fair in 1927 and gave half the proceeds to start the William Scott Memorial Fund. The next year the fair was even larger drawing nearly a thousand people to the Fair Grounds at Clark field. The fair opened with a parade at 10 AM followed with a number of races; the 3-legged race won by Green and Tuttle, 100 yard race for married men won by Lorimer Puffer, for single men won by Kermit Hood, the relay race won by Puffer, Hood and Stanley Taisey. Other sports included horseshoe pitching, boxing, tug-of-war, and a baseball game. In the afternoon speeches were given by Governor John E. Weeks, A. W. Lawrence Master of the State Grange, L. A. Cooley from the State Dept. of Agric., and Waldo F. Glover local historian. Booths displaying crafts and produce and livestock pens attracted much interest.

(continued on page 6)

SOME GROTON SCENES IN THE TWENTIES

1920 - 1929



Sleighs were used in winter



James Benzie's mail route in 'mud season'



Plummer School 1927



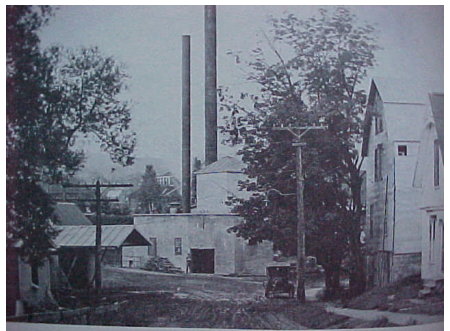
Float in Grange Fair parade



Roads were plowed in late 20's



West Groton School 1927



Groton Turning Works burned in 1926



Pine Street in Littly Italy



A. R. Taylor Block



Groton Granite Quarry



Fixing a flat tire



M. E. Church in West Groton



East view of Groton village

Groton Teachers - 1920's

Bailey, Ethel M.	1920-24
Beaton, Jessie I.	1920-22
Berry, Mary	1928-29
Billings, Marion	1925-28
Bixby, Olive	1926-29
Carter, Margaret	1928-29
Carusi, Ogla C.	1921-24
Catlin, Louella	1925-27
Darling, Nora	1923-28
Densmore, Dorothy	1923-25
Dunn, Alice	1920-21
Dunn, Annabella	1927-29
Dunn, Mrs. Arvilla	1923-24
Fellows, Lemira	1920-25
Foster, Mabel A.	1927-28
Frost, Millie	1920-26
Frost, Della	1927-29
Gadapee, Mildred	1928-29
Garvin, J. Stewart	1920-24
Garvin, Lillian	1922-29
Gibson, Mrs. Charles	1925-26
Gilman, Elliot	1927-29
Gould, Emily	1927-29
Grant, Dorothy	1926-29
Greenly, Mabel	1928-29
Hanson, Mrs. L. W.	1925-28
Heartz, Keziah	1927-29
Hood, Mildred	1929
Johnson, Page N.	1920-22
Johnson, Thelma	1929
Katz, Katherine	1922-24
Kennedy, Cora C.	1929
Lang, Minnie	1925-29
Leonard, Nola	1920-21
Lord, Alice	1928-29
McLam, Winifred	1920-21
Parker, Whitney F.	1925-28
Peck, Helen	1925-27
Perkins, Delta C.	1920-24
Quint, Muriel	1928-29
Ricker, Mrs. Ida Mae	1921-29
Rowe, Leslie R.	1929
Samuelson, Carl	1921-23
Scott, Florence	1929
Shields, Olive	1920-22
Shields, Vera	1920-26
Smith, R. B.	1925-26
Strong, Dorothy	1929
Sturtavant, Ralph	1923-24
Taylor, Mrs. A. R.	1920-22
Tillotson, Nora R.	1929
Welch, Lizzie L.	1920-21
White, Blanche	1921-26

Continued from page 3)

Music was provided on the field by the Barre band. The fair closed in the evening with a dance in Vance hall. Half the proceeds were again given to the William Scott Memorial Fund and the other half were for purchase of permanent grounds for the fair in future years.

Baptist ministers in Groton in the 1920's were Rev. E. W. Puffer 1920, Rev. Morgan 1924, Rev. Watrous 1925, Rev. Christian Peterson 1926, and Rev. Hudson in 1929. Methodist ministers were Rev. Stead Thornton 1920, Rev. C. D. Pierce 1923, Rev. E. W. Moulard 1925, Rev. F. L. Daniels 1927, and Rev. Alba M. Markey in 1929. The changes in ministers in Groton was even more frequent than the changes in teachers, reflecting the mood of the people in the 'roaring 20's'.

The stock market crash in 1929 was a major event in the country, state and town. It brought an end to the 'roaring 20's' and heralded an economic change for the coming decade.



Peter Paul House
Home of the Groton Historical
Society

FALL FOLIAGE DAY

October 6, 2001

A light fall rain washed the dust off the brilliantly colored leaves in the morning, but cleared up nicely for the parade and the rest of the day's activities.

McLure's Alumni Band held their concert in the Methodist Church and Nathan Puffer delayed his demonstration of Post and Beam construction until the weather cleared up in late morning.

The Lumberjack Breakfast at the Methodist Church started the day at 7 AM. Food and crafts were available all around town for the hungry and curious visitors.

Peter Paul Historical House was open for tours by the Groton Historical Society and many visitors were welcomed during the day. Russell Butler demonstrated blacksmithing at his post and beam blacksmith shop next door.

The parade was exceptional this year with many entries supporting the patriotic theme in remembrance of the victims of the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Groton's famous Chicken Pie Supper was served to 800 hungry visitors in 4 settings of 200 each.

FALL FOLIAGE DAY was closed with the traditional Hymn Sing at 8PM in the Methodist Church.



COMMENTS SOUGHT

Additions, corrections, comments and suggestions to improve the accuracy and content of the article reviewing the third decade of Groton History in the twentieth century will be welcome. Addendum can be published in future newsletters.

Watch for the review of the fourth decade - 1930 through 1939. Send any suggestions for events and people that should be included to the Groton Historical Society, attention editor.

Volunteers to write reviews of the other decades in the twentieth century will be appreciated. If you don't want to write the whole article, just send in the information about people and events that you would like to have included. If you have an interesting story about people and events in and around Groton why not share it with others interested in the history of our town?

NOTICE

OLD & NEW MEMBERS

2002 Annual dues are due

Annual dues are only \$5.00 and there is no joining fee. Come to the next meeting and help preserve the history of old Groton for the next generation. Anyone not able to attend meetings can send their dues to the Groton Historical Society, P.O. Box 89, Groton, VT 05046.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY DIGITAL NEWS

Dick Kreis has scanned images of the postcard collection and stored them in computer files for safe keeping and ease of viewing. He is now working on the photo collection and eventually many of the Society's other documents may be scanned and stored digitally for safe keeping and easy retrieval.

Willard Benzie now has 32,997 names and 11,433 families listed in the Groton Family Records. These include Groton families plus some of their ancestors and descendants. Tracy Puffer had Willard present a discussion of family history to her students at Blue Mountain last year and many of them completed their family history for the Historical Society records. Some of the information was already in the records, but a lot of additional information is now available to be added.

Groton Historical Society Newsletter
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