
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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Groton, Vermont 05046

Fall 2003

REVIEW OF GROTON, VERMONT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This is the eighth in a planned series of articles on Groton in the twentieth century. The eighth decade – ‘the seventies’ from 1970 to 1979 is taken from Town Reports and Mr. Glover’s Groton. This brief account needs review and additions from anyone interested in Groton’s history. Editor

TWENTIETH CENTURY GROTON The Eighth Decade 1970—1979

Groton residents will long remember the ‘flood of ‘73’ called “the worst flood in the history of the town” by some and compared to the ‘flood of ‘27’ by others. Bridges were washed away, sections of roads were completely destroyed, and homes were surrounded by the rising waters. Warnings gave little time for evacuation of those along the banks of the Wells River, which was rising rapidly from the flood waters coming from Groton Pond, Ricker’s Pond, Seyon

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NOTICES

The Society wishes to thank all who donated artifacts for display at the Peter Paul House.

Open house during fall foliage day was a success despite the weather

Annual dues of \$5.00 are due
January 1, 2004

OFFICERS

President	Richard Brooks
Vice President	Norma Hosmer
Secretary	Diane Kreis
Treasurer	Joan Haskell
Web Site Editor	James Dresser

MEETING SCHEDULE

(second Tuesday)

March through November
10 AM at the Peter Paul House,
253 Scott Hwy.

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Pond, and Levi Pond all draining into the river at the western part of the village. Several days of hard rain in late June led to the flood that wiped out bridges, roadways, and spilled into homes and businesses in the Wells River valley.

Highway 302 was impassable both east and west from the village. Crews were busy for several days repairing roads, bridges and restoring electricity. Civil Defense, Fire Department and volunteer crews, worked hard pumping water out of homes, restoring power, and helping with general cleanup.

The Railroad Street, Hanchetteville, Vance, and West Groton bridges were all washed out by the flood waters. Bridges were repaired quickly except for the one at the east end of the village, which has never been replaced.



The 70's opened a new era in the education of Groton students. All children in Kindergarten through High School attended Blue

Mountain Union (BMU) School when it first opened in the fall of 1970. BMU school district included all of the Wells River Valley serving the towns of Groton and Ryegate and the village of Wells River.

In April 1972 following Town Meeting, the Groton village school building was burned by the Firemen of town with the aid of fire crews from several surrounding towns as a training exercise. This training helped develop a comprehensive fire plan for the town of Groton.

By early July 1972 a new firehouse was built on the site of the razed village school building at a cost of \$10,500.



A fire at White's store early in the decade caused considerable damage to the upstairs living quarters. The Clark house at the east end of main street was completely

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THE SEYON HUNTING AND FISHING RANCH

By Bonnie Robitzer Blau

Editor's note: In the early 1890's when much of the timber in Groton had been harvested, Judge J. R. Darling had a dam constructed at the foot of "Clough" meadow forming Darling Pond. There he erected a sawmill and boarding house and began an extensive lumbering operation, under the direction of his son Robert Nelson Darling, utilizing the timber resource in Harris Gore (later annexed by the town of Groton). This was a prosperous business which he sold in 1898 to S. F. Griffith, then known as the "Lumber King of Vermont". In 1910 Theodore N. Vail, President of American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T), purchased the property, remodeled the boarding house for a vacation home, and changed the name to "Vail's Pond". A number of years later it was purchased by Mr. Peckett of Sugar Hill, NH, and then by Harry K. Noyes of Boston.

Seyon Hunting and Fishing Ranch was a business started in 1955 when my father and mother, Arlie and Marjorie Robitzer, bought the 3300 acre property from the Noyes family.

Harry K. Noyes purchased it in 1939 and called it Seyon, which is "Noyes" backwards, and it became Seyon Trout Ranch. It was a vacation home for the Noyes family, as it was for an earlier owner, Theodore N. Vail, President of AT&T.

Mr. Noyes, in addition to building a beautiful cement dam-breast which greatly enlarged what had first been known as Darling Pond and then Vail Pond, also erected a Wheelhouse at the base of

the dam-breast. This was a small water-powered electrical generating plant which supplied electricity to the ranch. We never used it for electricity, but it supposedly could have been rigged up to work again.

The original boarding house became a barn, which is still there. The present house may have also been a boarding house -- I am not sure. There is a fish hatchery on the property (probably still there), and I believe that was the work of Harry K. Noyes. My father used it for a year, but abandoned the use of the hatchery because the pond replenished itself with rainbow and brook trout found there without his assistance.

There is still a small cabin at the far end of the lake -- one room with a small wood stove -- and certain of Seyon's guests loved the solitary boat ride (row boat, no motors) to their most simple accommodation.

Most guests stayed in the main house (though the Wheelhouse was also able to accommodate up to 4 persons). During the fishing season, there were up to fifteen guests at Seyon at any one time. During the hunting season, there might be a few more.

The Ranch was closed to guests for the winter and early spring

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months, during which time much work was done by my father in the way of repairs and maintenance. For a while, with the help of Freddie Braman, my father also ran a selected logging operation on the property in the winter months, but abandoned it after a few years. I am not sure why, but my mother could probably tell you. I think there was a problem with the company who bought the lumber (Weyerhaeuser).

The running of Seyon Ranch as a hunting and fishing ranch was highly work-intensive, requiring 14-hour days for my parents. In addition, my sister Lyn and I worked before and after school as waitresses and chamber maids, and when he was old enough, my brother, Max, assisted my father. It was a family business, to be sure. When I left for college, Claudette Beaulieu Darling was hired to assist my mother.

Over the years my parents increased the size of Seyon to over 5,000 acres, buying up adjacent parcels of land when they became available. Though living and working at Seyon was a life my parents loved, over time my father's health made it clear that they would not be able to continue to maintain the property and continue the hard work necessary for its success much longer. With broken hearts, they sold Seyon Ranch in 1967 to the State of Vermont. My parents sold Seyon to the State to insure that the land would remain intact, and undeveloped,

preserving for all time its incredible natural beauty.

Seyon Ranch is now a day use area for fly fishing in season and is open year round as the only Bed & Breakfast run by Vermont State Parks.

My father and mother moved back to Pennsylvania, where we had come from, and retired to a small farm, where my father built a beautiful stone wall. A year later, my parents, missing the brisk air of New England, moved back to Vermont and later to New Hampshire, where they rebuilt together the old farmhouse in Benton where my mother presently lives, and where my father died in 1988.

From 1955 (and probably also before that time) to when it was sold in 1967, Seyon Ranch was the largest property taxpayer in the town, based on its original 3300 acres, and then on its later 5,000 acres. As one of the town's largest businesses, its tax dollars were crucial to the Town's economy. It seems appropriate to me that among the businesses listed in Groton's history of the 50s and 60s, Seyon Ranch should be mentioned.

Bonnie Robitzer Blau
Santa Barbara, California

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destroyed by fire in February 1977.

Deane Page was Postmaster all decade as well as the one before and the one after.

On October 3, 1976 two Groton natives, Eugene and Harold Puffer, were granted a license to operate a 1,000 watt radio station, WYKR, in Wells River, VT. This was the first local radio station for the area.

Businesses

Groton businesses listed in Mr. Glover's Groton, published in 1978 include the following:

Antiques and Maple Syrup
(Dolson's)

Don & Bill's Auto Repair
(Don Darling & Bill Cassidy)

Dana's Mill (Fred Dana)

Frost Builders and Contractors
(Elmer Frost and Son)

Groton Garage (Carwin Page)

Hamlett's 2nd Hand Goods & Antiques
(Delmar Hamlett)

Hatch's Sawmill (Dale Hatch)

Henry's Variety Store & Diner
(Alice L. Goodine)

Hill's Real Estate
(Howard Hill)

J.C. Auto Body (Jim Cilley)

Lillian's Beauty Shop
(Lillian Darling)

Meadows Restaurant
(George Buchannan)

Morse Poultry Farm
(Gerald Morse & son)

Moulton's 2nd Hand Store
(Rynold Moulton)

Northeastern Log Homes
(Douglas French)

Page's Roofing (Leslie Page)

Palmer's Red Barn & Snack Bar
(Carroll & Joan Palmer)

Puffer's Motel
(Harold & Janet Puffer)

Real Estate Brokerage
(Ida Dennis)

Tunbridge Tables
(John Rowell)

Vermont Tables & Handicraft, Inc.
(Tomlinson Brothers)

West Groton Garage
(Fred Emerson)

White's General Store
(Larry Hamlett)

Fall Foliage Day

Groton's famous Chicken Pie Supper was started more than a decade earlier to provide funds for the Groton School. When the High School closed in 1967 and the graded

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SOME GROTON SCENES IN THE SEVENTIES



Recreational activities at Lake Groton, formerly Groton Pond



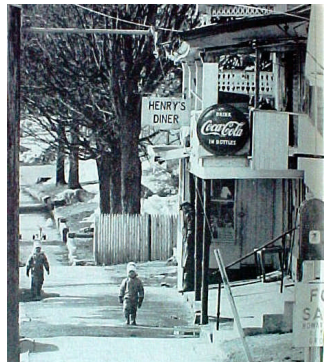
White's Store suffered fire damage in the early 1970's, especially to the living quarters over the store.



Henry Goodine



Puffer's Restaurant became Palmer's Red Barn and Snack Bar



Alice Goodine operated the store & diner after Henry's death in 1973

Guy & Lillie
chicken pie
(right) at fir



Dean Emerson at Vermont Tables

The Clark House burned in February 1977



Dean Darling (above) serving squash at the supper and Bill Palmer & Butch Gandin men's auction on Fall Foliage Day



Bruce Darling unloading at Hatch's Sawmill



Groton Garage, formerly Dimick's, operated by Carwin Page

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school closed in the spring of 1970, the Chicken Pie Suppers were continued by the Community Club to provide funds for the youth of Groton, and became a major feature of Fall Foliage Day in Groton. The volunteer firemen of Groton held an auction on Fall Foliage Day to raise funds for their new Fire Station erected in 1972 on the site of the old village school house.

Other activities on Fall Foliage Day, the first Saturday in October, included the Lumberjack Breakfast at the Methodist Church from 7 to 10 AM, the Boy Scout lunch at noon, the parade at 1:30 led by Blue Mountain Union School Band, many opportunities to view and purchase crafts, baked goods, candies, cider and maple syrup. The chicken pie supper with all it's trimmings was served to 800 reserved ticket holders in four settings from 4:30 to 7:30 PM each year of the decade. At 8 PM an old fashioned Hymn Sing was held in the Baptist Church, followed by the Lumberjack Ball in the Community Building from 9 to Midnight sponsored by the Fire Department.

Many people return to Groton to enjoy the fall colors and visit with friends and family.

TOWN OFFICERS

George Ricker served as Moderator, Tax Collector and 1st Constable until his death in 1976. Richard Montague was Moderator the rest of the decade and Harold Miller served as Tax Collector and 1st Constable. Ida Dennis was Town Clerk all decade and Treasurer until 1979 when Betty Morse replaced her. Selectmen were Raymond Page 10 years (appointed to replace Armond McGennis who resigned in 1979, the year he was elected); Michael Blair 5 yrs.; Harold Eastman Jr. 4 yrs.; Guy Haskell, Stanley Hart, and Austin Welch 3 yrs. each; and Gerald Morse 2 years. Listers were Herman Clark 8 years; Kenneth Eastman 7 yrs.; Elizabeth Smith 6 yrs.; Guy Darling 4 yrs.; Fred Dana and Stanley Hart 2 yrs. each; and Lynn Bandy one year. Auditors were M. Ross McLeod 9 years; Josephine French 6 yrs.; Geraldine Gandin and Betty Dolson 4 yrs. each; James Comley 3 yrs.; Mildred Hart 2 yrs.; and Susan Page and Debra Hamlett one year each. BMU Directors from Groton were Kenneth Eastman 9 years;

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Josephine French 6 yrs.; Joan Palmer 4 yrs.; Robert Gruber and Deane Page 3 yrs. each; Janet Puffer 2 yrs.; and Betty Morse and Sally Blair one year each. Library Trustees were Theresa Vance 10 years; Shirley Darling 9 yrs.; Violet Ruitter 8 yrs.; Sally Blair 6 yrs.; Joyce Frost and Betty Dolson 4 yrs. each; Esther Darling 3 yrs.; Aline Gruber and Kathleen Paterson 2 yrs. each; and Thelma Ricker and Ruth Putnam one year each. Clifford Darling was elected Road Commissioner from 1970 through 1974. The road commissioner was appointed by the selectmen for the next four years and in 1979 Ralph Hatch was elected to the position.

Fire Chiefs for the volunteer Fire Department during the decade included Harold Puffer and Deane Page.

The Baptist minister was Rev. Donald Macomber (1969 – 81). Methodist ministers were Rev. Peter N. Holm, 1970; Philip Lawton, '72; N. Diaz, '74; Edwin Burke, a retired interim pastor; and Connie Bryan, '78.

TOWN HISTORY

The town advanced

\$11,000 in 1977 to publish the history of Groton started by Waldo Glover in the 40's and completed by the GHS in 1978. One third of the books were sold the first year after publication and it is now out of print.

A granite plaque at the Community Building honoring all veterans was dedicated in 1976 as part of the nation's Bicentennial celebration. World War I Veterans who were present at the dedication were: Harold Taylor, Joseph McQueen, Austin Lund, and Perley Williams.

Organizations serving the youth of Groton were the 4-H, the Boy Scouts, the Baptist Youth Awana Group, the Methodist Youth Fellowship, and the Little League. Adults could join the Historical Society, the Community Club, the Volunteer Fire Department, and 'The Buckaroos of 302', a snowmobiling club.

HELP NEEDED

Need a volunteer to prepare a short write-up of Groton in the eighties, 1980 to 1989, for the newsletter. If you can do this please send it to the editor or e-mail it to:

jwbenzie@uslink.net

Thank you .

Somebody Stole My Pond

(About a little pond that is now a lake)

By Andrew Jackson "Jack" Carpenter

I'm 75 years old and hurting. But I think the tragedy of my old age is the loss of privacy, the continuous noisy world, on the ground and in the air and today I realized most all the love I have ever received since I left Vermont at 18, I have had to buy. There have been shared moments or days, mostly every bit of love, joy or excitement came from reaching deep into my wallet and when at 75 the wallet is empty, I get pity or scorn but only infrequently any love. When love does reach out to me it is very precious.

In 1915 when I was born my parents owned a cabin on Groton Pond. My dad [Warren Carpenter] was a rural mail carrier. When school was out he moved us from our home in Groton to the 2 story, big veranda cottage to the quiet of our own blue heaven. There were no motor boats or sail boats, or radios, and only 4 cabins all far apart. He built his own row boats and all we had to do if we wanted fish for dinner was drop our lines for perch and pickerel and bass. Sometimes a turtle would get on the hook and my mother would scream until we unhooked it and turned it loose.

My cousins owned their cottage at the foot of the lake near the Ricker Mills log mill. On a knoll overlooking the mill was the Ricker Family's fine home. They were wealthy. The railroad track ran between their house and the pond. It too was a big 2 stories with porches above and below the full length but it was locked. Nobody seemed to talk about it.

At night we all sat on the front porch of our cabin and listened for the cry of the whippoorwill. If we heard his call it meant rain.

Just a short distance from the cabin was a small rise of land, too small to be called a cliff and here Indian Joe had lived and died. Around the rise was more pond, a big harbor where there was one cabin I remember but I never saw anyone live in it.

Indian Joe's fire pit where he cooked was still there outlined with big oval stones. They said he lived in a teepee and fisherman coming to the pond always brought him gifts of wool blankets and clothes and canned food. After one long cold winter, he disappeared, was never seen again. We loved to go to Joe's place and on the sandy beach below we dug turtle eggs, made believe we were Indians and sometimes built a fire in Indian Joe's outdoor stove.

Sometimes my dad on weekends came up and would row my mother along the shoreline to pick rhododendrons and beautiful pink [lady] slippers or go ashore and fill pails full of blueberries, blackberries and wild strawberries. They were in clumps and no berry today has the flavor of those wild strawberries.

That cabin didn't have running water but nearby was a bubbling spring so ice cold we kept milk and butter in big glass jugs and nothing ever spoiled. There was a 2 seater little house down a trail from the big house and always a catalogue and a pail of lime to discourage the flies.

One day recently I saw a new book of state maps. Groton was not on the Vermont map. There was Groton State Park and Lake Groton. Then I saw an advertisement for cottages for rent on Lake Groton by a company in Connecticut. How sad to destroy such a beautiful pond, its quiet and all its natural flowers and bountiful free berries. I suppose they have a cabin or more likely a Lakeside Home with motor boats and blasting music covering Indian Joe's legacy. I don't want to go home to Vermont now. I remember a beautiful, quiet pond. I prefer to keep the memory. Then I was too young to thank God for those beautiful years so I thank him now. Indian Joe must have talked to God and he must have told Joe, go find a better place, soon this pond I created will be another hell on earth. Sleep peacefully Indian Joe at least we savored the good times.

A. CARPENTER
JESUS WAS A CARPENTER

Couldn't sleep last nite, so yellow padded. Only copy. Hope you like it and I have ghost written it for you. The signature has no meaning. A great Boston cartoonist once wrote it on a slip of paper and handed it to me. Over the years I lost the paper but never forgot what he wrote. His name was Newton Newkirk of the Boston Post.

Editor's note: Jack Carpenter was born in Groton, VT November 20, 1915 and graduated from Groton High School in 1934. He died in Yuma, AZ December 16, 1992. A friend of his sent this story he wrote to the Groton Town Clerk about six months before he died, with a note that he had terminal cancer.



Home of the Groton Historical Society built in 1840
Open for visitors 2 - 4 pm Sundays in July and August and all day on the
first Saturday in October for Fall Foliage Day in Groton, Vermont.

Groton Historical Society Newsletter
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