
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Volume 19 Issue 4

Groton, Vermont 05046

Fall 2006

GROTON'S PIONEERS



Ricker's sawmill in the 1960's.
The first mill on this site was built
by Edmund Morse in 1790.

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Part Four: Edmund Morse

This is the fourth in a planned series on the early pioneers in Groton. Articles on Jesse Heath, Aaron Hosmer and James Abbott were in previous issues of the Newsletter.

Edmund Morse was born 1 Oct 1764 in Reading, MA. He purchased a proprietor's right in Groton, VT on 12 Sep 1786. On December 28, 1786 he married Sarah Wesson, daughter of Captain Ephriam Wesson, in Haverhill, NH. Sarah was born in Groton, MA on July 1, 1764. They settled on what was later surveyed as lot number four in the northeast corner of Groton Township and lived in Groton until their deaths. He died on 13 Sep 1843 and she died 12

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MEETING SCHEDULE

(second Tuesday)

March through November
10 AM at the Peter Paul House,
1203 Scott Hwy.

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Nov 1843 only two months after her husband. The 1790 census of Groton lists 5 people in the household, two males 16 plus years of age (Edmund and perhaps a hired man or maybe his brother-in-law Peter Wesson who settled on lot no. 5 soon after the census), one male under 16 (Peter b. January 12, 1790), and two females (Sarah and their daughter, Sally age 3). Edmund and Sarah had 10 children all born in Groton. The first, Sally, was born September 2, 1787 and was claimed to be the first child born in Groton, by her son General Albert Harleigh Hill, a noted Groton historian. This claim is displayed on her tombstone and on one of the memorial stained glass windows in the Groton United Methodist Church. However, this doesn't seem correct as Jesse and Phebe (Straw) Heath's first three children were born in Groton earlier; John on 25 Dec 1782, Susanna on 27 Jan 1784, and Thomas on 13 Dec 1785, as reported in the Ryegate History. And Sarah Abbott, daughter of James and Zelpha (Smith) Abbott was born 25 Aug 1784, the first recorded birth that Waldo Glover found in the town records.

Edmund Morse built the first sawmill and gristmill in town about 1790 and a sawmill continued operation on this site for more than 16 decades under several owners, including Noyes, Lund and Ricker, whose names were successively given to the Pond where the mill was built.

Undoubtedly the mill provided lumber for his plank home which may have been the first one in Groton. Perhaps that was the basis for his grandson, General A. H. Hill, to claim him as the first permanent settler; log homes were considered temporary dwellings at that time. By 1803 there were 5 plank houses in town, including Edmund's, noted on the first Grand List for Groton.

On 6 June 1797 Moses Noyes acquired the mill property at what was then called Noyes Pond. Moses Noyes was not listed in the 1800 census and his wife, Susanna, gave Silas Lund a quit-claim deed to the property in 1804. Edmund Morse built another sawmill on Lot No. 31, First Division, which he had purchased on April 25, 1791 from Robert Johnson, the original proprietor. This saw mill was located on the North Branch of the Wells River, the site where Hosea Welch Jr. later had a saw mill. Edmund sold this mill and property to George W. Chandler on March 3, 1819.

The first gristmill built by Captain Morse in conjunction with his sawmill was operated by several owners, including Walter Buchanan who took possession of both mills in 1839. He rebuilt the sawmill and dismantled the gristmill, as the two gristmills in the village at that time were apparently more conveniently located. Most of the grain grown in

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Birth of 'THE NUTCRACKER' at GHS

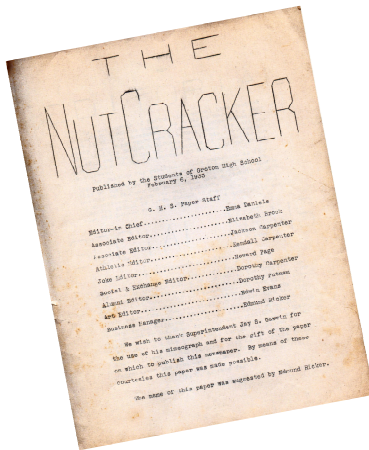
The first issue of the *NutCracker* at Groton High School was published on February 6, 1933 by the students. Although it was not the first school paper, it was a successful one and it evolved into the Groton High School Yearbook which was then published each year by the graduating class until the school closed in 1967, except for the year 1943 when there was no yearbook published due to World War II shortages.

The name *NutCracker* was suggested by Edmund Ricker, Business manager for the paper. Editor-in-Chief was Emma Daniels; Associate Editors were Elizabeth Brock and Jackson Carpenter; Athletic Editor Kendall Carpenter; Joke Editor Howard Page; Social & Exchange Editor Dorothy Carpenter; Alumni Editor Dorothy Putnam; and Art Editor Edwin Evans.

An earlier school paper was

called the *Sandwich Spread*, but it was not successful and was given up after a short life.

Crawford Adams, a graduate of Groton High School class of '23, was the principal and Jay Stewart Garvin was the Superintendent. Mr. Garvin supplied the paper and the use of his mimeograph to publish the 8 page paper.



The 1932-33 school year had 85 pupils enrolled and only 2 had left school when the paper was published in February. This was during the Great Depression when jobs were non-existent so there was little incentive to drop out of school. You can always find some good in almost everything.

Freshman Reception was the big social event of the year with King Spartaco Secchairi and Queen Carlene Page pronouncing penalties on uninitiated freshman.

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY WEB PAGE

Easy access from <http://www.grotonvt.com>

Groton was ground at Morse's gristmill in the early years. Mr. Buchanan died in 1843 and the sawmill ownership changed hands several more times before the Ricker family took possession on 14 April 1856 and operated a mill here for more than a century.

Edmund Morse was also the first blacksmith in town, practicing the trade from the time he arrived in 1786. In 1801 he was elected selectman of the town along with Jesse Heath and James Hooper. He was one of the earliest members of the Baptist Church.

Edmund was the first captain in the Town Militia and was known as Captain Edmund Morse. His son Isaac was the last Captain when the Militia disbanded in 1844. The 1803 Grand List for Groton also credits Edmund with 20 acres of cleared land, the most of any settler; one of 4 silver watches in town; 4 milking cows; and 20 sheep among other things such as oxen, horses, and young stock.

Children of Edmund and Sarah (Wesson) Morse

Sally was the oldest, born in Groton on 2 Sep 1787 and died in St. Johnsbury on 1 Dec 1864 at the age of 77. She married John Hill (b. 15 Apr 1770, d. 11 Jul 1840) on 10 Jan 1805 in Groton and the GHS Family records state they reared 8 children, but only four children are listed for them; William (b & d 1804), a daughter who died in 1834, Albert Harleigh Hill (b.

15 Aug 1815, d. 4 May 1897), and Benjamin (b. 1822). Three other burials in the Hill plot in the Darling cemetery are unidentifiable.

Peter was born in Groton on 12 Jan 1790. He married Jane McLaughlin (b. about 1792, d. 1833) on 23 Dec 1812 in Groton. No other information about Peter was found in the family records at the Historical Society.

Betsey Eliza was born in Groton 27 Mar 1792 and died in Troy, VT 2 Apr 1826. She married Nathan Hanson Downs (b. 26 Jun 1793, d. 12 Dec 1862) in April 1812 in Groton. Betsey and Nathan had 7 children: Sally born in Groton 29 May 1813 and died in Cedar Rapids, IA. She was married to Daniel Snow in Aug 1832 in Troy, VT and then to Ebenezer Batchelder 2 Oct 1854; Harley B. b. 10 Feb 1815 and died 10 days later; Edmund M. b. 15 Aug 1816 and became a physician; Nathan b. 9 Mar 1819; Eliza B. b. 10 May 1821 and d. the same year; Lucinda M. b. 31 Jul 1823; and Moses D. b. 4 Apr 1825 and died the same year. Betsey's husband, Nathan H. Downs, made Downs Elixir, a well known patent medicine.

Polly was born in Groton 28 Nov 1794 and died 24 Mar 1814 age 19. She is buried in the Groton-Peacham cemetery.

Lydia was born in Groton 29 May 1797. She married Ossa Wilmot in Groton about 1812. No other information about Lydia was found.

Hannah was born in Groton 9 Jan 1800 and died 28 Feb 1814 age 14. She is buried in the Groton-Peacham cemetery.

Susan was born in Groton 12 Jan 1802 and died 25 Jul 1843 age 41. She married James B. Whitehill (b. 3 Oct 1813, d. 15 Dec 1889) in Groton on 15 Nov 1838 and they had two children: Aaron (b. 25 Jan 1841, d. 22 Nov 1870); and Susan (b. 11 Jul 1843, d. Feb 1882). James had 3 more wives after Susan's death and four more children.

Lucinda was born in Groton in Feb 1805 and she married Moses Darling (b. 4 Nov 1815) her 5th cousin and they had a daughter, Jennie T. born in 1861. Moses was the son of Moses and Betsey (Thompson) Darling. Moses, Lucinda and Jennie were enumerated in the 1880 census of Boston.

Edmund Jr. was born in Groton 10 Feb 1807. He served 3 years on the Groton School Superintending Committee between 1827 and 1833. He married Patience Devol in Groton on 29 Mar 1838.

Isaac was born in Groton 1 Sep 1809 and died at Derby, VT in Nov 1869 age 60. He married Lois Hooper, daughter of James and Polly (Emery) Hooper, the 17 May 1832 and they had 4 children, the first 3 born in Groton: Peter b. 5 May 1833;

Sarah Jane b. 23 Jun 1835, d. 30 Oct 1858; Webster b. 26 Jul 1840, d. Sep 1863; and Isaac Harleigh b. 19 Jan 1856 in Derby, VT.

Ancestors of Edmund Morse

The emigrant ancestor of Edmund was Anthony (1606-1686) born in Marlborough England and sailed from North Hampton on the ship "James" arriving in Boston June 8, 1635. He was married twice and had 12 children. Mr. Glover's record states he died in Newbury, MA but other records give Hartford, CT. His son, Anthony (1632-1677) was born in Marlborough, England and came to America with his father. He married Elizabeth Knight 8 May 1659 in Newbury, MA where they lived and died. Their son, Anthony (1663-1710) married Sarah Pike 4 Feb 1685 in Newbury, MA where they also lived and died. Their son, Stephen (1695-1758) married Elizabeth Kelly 21 July 1725 and lived in Newbury, MA. Their son Thomas (1726-1799) married Elizabeth Bartlett (1725-1802) 30 June 1747 in Bradford, MA and raised a family of 11, including Edmund their 8th child.

Edmund was a fourth cousin of Moses Darling, son of John Darling, another Groton Pioneer. John Darling was third cousin of Edmund Morse's father, Thomas Morse.

PHOTOGRAPHS and CAMERAS

See “Development of Photography” on page 8



A “pre-photography” silhouette of Susanna Jennings (1807-1852), Great Grandmother of Helen (Peck) Benzie.



An 1844 daguerreotype of Louis Daguerre, and his camera

Copied from Awake, June 2006.



Daguerreotype about 1855 of Jerome Bliss (1832-1902) son of Susanna Jennings and Grandfather of Helen (Peck) Benzie. Picture is on a metal plate and mounted in a closeable framed box for preservation.



A Kodak box camera from the early 1900's invented by George Eastman to use the roll film he patented in 1884.



A self-developing Polaroid folding camera from the 1970's invented by Edwin Land in the late 1940's.



George Eastman (1854-1932) inventor and founder of Eastman Kodak Company.



George Eastman and Thomas Edison with the Motion Picture Camera invented by Edison in 1888 and the flexible film improved by Eastman in 1889 which were critical in development of the motion picture industry.



A digital camera developed by Sony Corp. in the 1990's called the Mavica records pictures in megapixels and stores them on a floppy disc for viewing on a monitor or printing photographs in gray scale, color, or sepia tone.

DEVELOPMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Daguerreotypes to Digitals

The first practical photograph, called a daguerreotype, became available in 1839 and the reaction was overwhelming. Helmut Gernsheim writes in his book *The History of Photography*: "Perhaps no other invention ever captured the imagination of the public to such a degree and conquered the world with such lightning speed as the daguerreotype." (Awake June 2006) And it was available in Groton by 1843—only four years later .

"In the [Danville] *North Star* for Oct. 7, 1843, R. H. Wilmot of Groton 'from the Philographic Institute,' advertises that he takes daguerreotypes and will keep on hand a supply of apparatus and instruct pupils in the art. This must have been one of the earliest attempts at photography in this vicinity and a number of daguerreotypes taken by Mr. Wilmot are in existence." (*History of Ryegate, Vermont* 1913).

The art of photography evolved from the camera obscura used by artists in the 16th century. The camera obscura - literally, in Latin, "dark chamber"- projects an inverted image on the opposite wall when light enters the chamber through a tiny hole. This principle, known for many centuries, was observed by Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), described by the Arabic scholar Al-

hazen in the 10th century, and the 15th century painter, Leonardo de Vinci wrote about it in his notebooks. And when the lens was developed in the 16th century the accuracy of the camera obscura was enhanced. Many artists then used it to improve perspective and scale in their drawings. But all attempts to make the images permanent failed, until the 19th century.

French physicist Joseph-Nicephore Niepce (1765-1833) experimented with making permanent photos early in the 19th century and in 1826 he found a light-sensitive substance: bitumen of Judea. He put a bitumen-coated pewter plate in a camera obscura and exposed it for eight hours resulting in what is the earliest surviving 'permanent' photograph ever taken (Awake June 2006; Encarta 1994).

Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre (1789-1851) a French painter collaborated with Niepce in 1829 and after Niepce's death in 1833, he revised and refined the process by using silver iodide to coat copper plates, which was more light sensitive than bitumen. Daguerre discovered that a latent picture appeared after treating the exposed plate with mercury fumes. In 1837 he improved the method by washing the plate with a salt solu-

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tion which prevented the picture from darkening over time. Daguerreotype was the earliest widely-practiced form of photography (Encarta 1994). The invention, however, caused great anxiety among painters who saw it as a threat to their livelihood.

About the same time, William Henry Fox Talbot, an English physicist, made photographs by putting silver-chloride-coated sheets of paper in a camera obscura. The resulting negative was waxed for transparency, placed over another coated paper and exposed to sunlight, producing a positive image. Although the quality was inferior to daguerreotypes, the process proved to have greater potential. Multiple copies could be made from a single negative, and paper copies were cheaper and easier to handle than the daguerreotypes. Many others also claimed to have invented photography when Daguerre's invention was first announced to the world in 1839 (Awake 2006). For most of the 19th century photography was the domain of a few professionals because it required large cameras and metal or glass photographic plates.

George Eastman (1854-1932) a self-educated American inventor from Waterville, New York played a leading role in advancing photography. In 1884 Eastman patented the first practicable roll film; in 1888 he designed the Kodak box camera, specifically for roll film. In

1892 he established the Eastman Kodak Company, at Rochester, New York, the first company to mass-produce photography equipment. After exposing the roll of film in their Kodak box camera amateur photographers could send the entire camera to the factory for developing the film, printing photos, reloading the camera with a new roll of film and returning everything to the customer.

In 1926 Edwin Herbert Land (1909-1991) an American physicist and inventor from Bridgeport, CT became interested in polarized light (light oriented in a plane with respect to the source) while a freshman at Harvard University. He developed a new kind of polarizer, which he called Polaroid, by aligning and embedding crystals in a plastic sheet. Land left Harvard in his senior year and opened a laboratory nearby with other young scientists applying the polarizing principle to light filters, optical devices, and motion picture processes. In 1937 the group became the Polaroid Corporation with Land as president and head of research. They introduced the first model of the self-developing Polaroid Land camera in the late 1940s. Instant film provided photographs within seconds or minutes of taking the picture. Exposure, development, and printing all took place within their special camera. The Polaroid process used a conventional silver-halide emulsion. After the film was

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exposed and a negative image produced, the negative was sandwiched with photographic paper and processing chemicals and a fogging agent transferred the negative image to the paper, producing a print.

Late in the 20th century a new form of photography was introduced that captured images with electronic recording of the visual information in megapixels, instead of using light-sensitive emulsions. The Sony Corporation in Japan developed a still video camera called the Mavica that recorded visual data—light reflected from objects in the scene photographed—onto a floppy disk (later models used a compact disk - CD). Canon U.S.A also entered the still-video-camera market storing the visual data on a microchip. Many other digital cameras followed, including Kodak and Polaroid, capturing images on a microchip or memory stick capable of holding hundreds of pictures. Photos can be viewed on video monitors, sent by e-mail (electronic mail), stored on digital media, and images of the photos can be printed.

Photography has come a long way from Daguerreotypes to Digitals. Major advances occurred about every five decades from the tintypes in 1840's to roll film cameras in 1890's, self-developing cameras in 1940's, and digital cameras in the 1990's. Many other improvements along the way included such things as faster film, higher resolution, color, and supplemental light-

ing from flash powder, flash bulbs and strobe lights. The development of slides allowed images to be projected on screens to be enjoyed by large groups of people.

The flexible film improved by George Eastman in 1889 for the motion picture camera invented in 1888 by Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931) were critical in establishing the motion picture industry. Home movies followed, first in black and white and then in color, with 16mm, 8mm and Super 8 film. These movies were eventually replaced by video tape which also allowed recording sound along with the pictures. Video tapes were then replaced by Digital Video Discs (DVD's).

What's next in the advancement of photography remains to be seen, but something new will surely develop.

References

History of Ryegate, Vermont 1913, Miller and Wells p.588
"How Photography saw the Light."
Awake June 2006 p.20-23
"Photography" Microsoft (R) Encarta. Copyright (c) 1994 Microsoft Corporation.



Kodak Disc Camera popular in 1960's

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Members in good standing since the summer newsletter are Allen Gandin, Mary Grant, Martha Rogers, Jean Malnati and Marion Page.

The Society voted to increase the annual dues for membership in the society to \$10 starting in January 2007.

The Newsletter is posted on the Society's web page (see page 3). In addition to reading the newsletter online, you will be able to see the transcribed Groton census records for 1790 to 1880 and 1900 to 1930. The 1890 census records were destroyed by fire, so a copy of the 1888 Groton Business Directory from Childs Gazetteer is posted with the census records. You will also be

able to read most of the cemetery listings for Groton.

The Historical Society will be open to visitors on Fall Foliage Day in Groton, the first Saturday in October each year, and by appointment only from May to October.

The newsletter will be sent to the address of members in good standing. The last year of dues payment is shown on the mailing label. If you are delinquent, the label will be highlighted on your last issue. Please notify the Society of any errors. We 'tend to be liberal, but limited, with our grace period.

Our request for help in identifying the people and date of the photo in the Summer issue got no response. [Did anyone see it?]

2007 Membership Application

Mail to:

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Groton, VT 05046-0089

Name _____

Street/P.O. Box _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

e-mail: _____

Annual dues are \$10



Groton Historical Society meeting house built in 1840 by Peter Paul
Used to display and store historical records and artifacts since 1989
Open to visitors the first Saturday in October—Fall Foliage Day in
Groton— and by appointment from May to October

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J. W. Benzie, Editor
P. O. Box 89
Groton, VT 05046-0089

