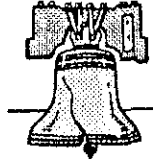


The Groton Historical Society



NEWSLETTER

GROTON, VERMONT

FALL 1991

NO. 13



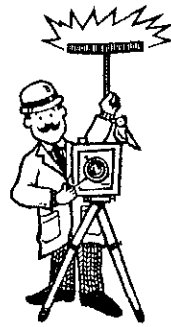
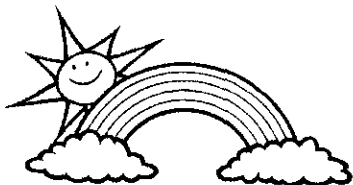
Many thanks to all of those who worked so hard and long getting the "HOUSE" ready for the Open House and Historic Display on Fall Foliage Day.

Cleaning, repairing, painting, papering! So many people volunteered to work on this project that we will issue a "blanket THANK YOU" to all, rather than try to list names and risk the danger of missing anyone.

The Open House was a great success, and scores of visitors came to see the house and look over the display of quilts, historic items and the antiques loaned for the day by Richard Brooks. Also, special thanks must be given to Jork Oil Co. of Wells River, who donated an oil furnace.

There is much work yet to be done in other parts of the house, but that will be postponed until spring.

The Historic Society held it's first meeting in it's new quarters on Tues., November 12, 1991 (an Historic date!).



Ellis Paint & Wallpaper of St. Johnsbury assisted our "wallpaper committee" in choosing the proper paper for for our House.

They sent a photographer down to our Nov. meeting to take pictures of the Historical Society members AND the Wallpaper. This picture along with a congratulatory message to the Society from Ellis Co. should appear soon in the Journal Opinion. (Good advertising for Ellis, and good publicity for us.)

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On Dec. 10, 1991, after our regular meeting, the Historical Society invites everyone to a "Tea and Mini-Christmas Bazaar"

at the house - from 10:00 A.M. till 2:00 P.M.

The Society will have it's special Sweatshirts for sale, and the Sewing Group of the Groton United Methodist Church will have a variety of craft items and other things on sale.



EARLY ROAD MAINTENANCE

(Excerpts from "Mr. Glover's Groton")

The early inhabitant of Groton had the option of paying his road tax in money, in labor on the highway, or in having such part of his land sold at auction as would satisfy the tax. He generally chose to pay in labor. This custom of "working out taxes" was continued until 1887 when by legislative enactment the road tax was collected in money.

The period of "working out taxes" was a real event in the life of the district or neighborhood. The time chosen - in fact fixed by law - was in the spring of the year but not until the roads were well rid of mud; and again in the fall, in order to get the roads in condition for winter. Each surveyor received previous instructions from the Board of Selectmen concerning his district: the amount of money he could spend, the amount of each man's assessment, and the rate of wages. As in former days the captain of the town militia had called out his men for training, so the road surveyor called out his men to make the roads. They came armed not with swords and guns but with the more peaceful implements of the farm - hoes, picks, shovels, and crowbars. One of the group, perhaps the surveyor himself brought a pair of horses hitched to a land plow. A few furrows were plowed on each side of the road, the last furrow making a ditch. Then with hoes and shovels the party went to work drawing the earth toward the center and smoothing it to the satisfaction of the boss. One thing could not be omitted in road making and that was the construction of a sufficient number of water bars, or thank-ye-ma'ms on the long sweep

grades. These served the double purpose of deflecting water into the ditches, which otherwise might make ruts down the middle of the road, and of making wheel rests to enable tired horses to recover breath.

So for ninety years roads were made and maintained on one unchanging pattern, but in 1886 or 1887 a scraper with a horse hitch and two handles to be grasped by the most muscular man in town was acquired as the Town's initial road equipment. This was passed around and used as needed. In 1889 a road machine was bought for \$112.80. This machine, with blade set at an angle, was in principle not unlike the modern road scraper, except that it was horse-drawn. With its use the roads, still narrow, were crowned and the ditches deepened. More than one of the earliest inhabitants who had "worked out" taxes for many years remarked in no hushed tones, "That tarnal thing is sp'ilin' all our roads."

In the year 1887 a measure went into effect which corrected an injustice of long standing. Up to that time a town was liable for the upkeep of all of its roads and bridges, even those used by people of other towns. By an act of the General Assembly of 1886 state assistance was given a town for the maintenance of roads and bridges of this description.

The closing years of the century also saw a general, country-wide movement for better roads, even before the advent of the automobile had forced the issue; that movement reached and influenced even conservative Vermont. But, by and large, to the end of the century, roads were about what they had always been - ordinary dirt roads. If the land was sandy the road was sandy; if the land was chiefly of clay, so was the road - caked and rough when dry, mirey when wet.

