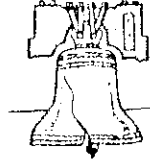


The Groton Historical Society



NEWSLETTER

GROTON, VERMONT

FEBRUARY 1995



(1984 Photo)

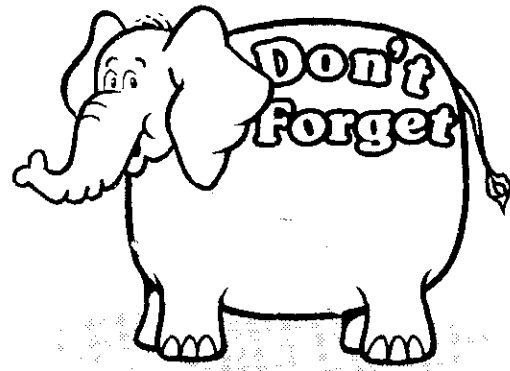
Alice Goodine, the President of The Groton Historical Society, celebrated her 90th Birthday on January 19th. Her family and friends celebrated with her at a reception at the Groton United Methodist Church.

Alice now resides in Danville, Vt. and for those who wish to write to her the address is:

Mrs. Alice Goodine
Woodside House
Danville, VT 05828

On February 5th, Alice was in town to help celebrate the 90th birthday of another old friend, George Blanchard, who was 90 on February 2nd.

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DUES ARE DUE.....the 1995 dues of the Society are \$5.00!

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The Groton Historical Society meets on the second Tuesday of each month at the Historical House, at 9:00 AM.

All interested persons are invited to attend and JOIN.

Even on these cold winter mornings the house is cozy and warm! Refreshments are served after the meeting.



(Excerpts from Mr. Glover's Groton)

THE DISTRICT SCHOOL

"As we have already learned from early records the first schoolhouses were crude affairs. We have seen that one was a discarded log dwelling, adapted as well as might be to its new use. It is likely however, that by 1813 all five districts in Groton had provided new plank or frame schoolhouses heated by a fireplace at one end of the building.

We have no plan of these buildings but if they followed the general pattern there was a continuous writing desk against the walls of the two sides, also against one end of the teacher's desk, and the fireplace was at the same end. In front of this writing desk was a continuous backless bench on which the larger pupils sat, facing the desk if they were writing or ciphering, with their backs to the teacher; but facing the teacher during recitation. The younger children sat in lower benches without desks, in front of the larger pupils.

This arrangement at the Southeast School is seen from the record of a district meeting on November 23, 1818, when it was voted "to fix seats and writing benches", and to purchase "a writing bench the width of the house and a seat the same length." Oliver Rhodes was voted fifty cents for the work and an additional fifty cents to top out the "chimbley", and to furnish a board for the new writing bench.

It was not before 1820, perhaps later, that plank seats and desks, each accommodating two pupils were installed. This type was in use until the "patent" seats and desks of post-Civil War days became available. The Village School of 1868 was probably the first to have "patent" seats and desks. As late as 1910 the No. 3 (Plummer) School was still equipped with the ancient desks, and the old NO. 1 School still had them with many a "jackknives carved initial" when the ninety-seven year old building was razed in the spring of 1952.

Although stoves began to appear about 1810 it was some years before they found their way into the schoolhouses of Groton. In the late

teens there was much discussion over the problem of making the buildings comfortable for winter school. Typical were the vote in the Center Disctict on October 15, 1817: "that the Committee repair the back of ~~the back of~~ the Chimney sufficient to answer for the present winter", and the vote of the Southeast Disctict on November 22, 1819, that John Taisey be alloed \$2.70 "to repair the chimney in sd School House." At last, after much wrangling, the center District on Dec. 8, 1818: "voted to procure a Stove for the School House 2 feet in length and to procure a pipe six feet long." For this "extravagance" a tax of one and one half cents on a dollar fo the grand list was voted, with Dominicus Gray as collector. This so impoverished the district that they voted two months of school instead of of three for the following winter term. The next Spring, still suffering under the expense of the stove, the district voted that the committee shal hire a mistress as cheap and as reasonable as they can. It was not until five years later that the Southeast District, after years of argument voted to purchase a stove, to raise fifteen dollars to defray the expense thereof, and to allow John Taisey \$4.45 for repairing the schoolhouse, a job which would include the bricking up of the fireplace and adapting the chimney to the use of the new stove. As we have no records for the other three districts, we can only presume that all the shcoolhouses were heated by stoves by the year 1825.

The room equipment of the early schools was meager indeed. Globes and wall maps were quite unknown in Groton until late in the century, as was also the reference library. Without the latter there was no need of a book-case until the advent of free text books in 1895. The blackboard was also a late acquisition. Individual slates for writing and ciphering, however, were in general use quite early in the century. Wide boards, planed smooth and painted black, and sometimes the smooth surface of a plastered wall, served as a blackboard. Writing and ciphering thereon was with hunks of carpenter's chalk until the introduction of blackboard crayon in the seventies.

In the next issue the subject of the school's curriculum will be discussed.