
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Volume 16 Issue 1

Groton, Vermont 05046

Spring 2003

REVIEW OF GROTON, VERMONT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This is the sixth in a planned series of articles on Groton in the twentieth century. The sixth decade - the fifties' - from 1950 through 1959 is written by Harold and Janet Puffer. Main sources are the Town Reports, High School yearbooks, Mr. Glover's Groton and personal memories.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Groton

The Sixth Decade

1950 - 1959

By Harold and Janet Puffer

The 1950's were years of growth and change and prosperity. The darkest shadow of the decade being the Korean conflict from June 1950 to July 1953. American entrepreneurial spirit had geared up to mass produce autos and tools so that Groton was seeing new cars and agricultural equipment rolling through main street. Inflation had yet to rear its head. It was well into the decade before an automobile

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NOTICES

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

The Society voted to publish Family Genealogy Records collected by Waldo F. Glover and updated by the members. See page 9 for update

OFFICERS

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

MEETING SCHEDULE

(second Tuesday)

March through November
10 AM at the

Peter Paul House, 253 Scott Hwy.

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could possibly hold \$5.00 worth of gasoline. It is interesting to note that Groton's treasurer reported \$45.06 cash on hand January 1, 1950. Groton evidenced the optimistic trend that America was generating after the end of WWII and especially the Korean conflict in 1953. One of Groton's big boosts was the establishment of Luce Mfg. Co. (1949). Over 25 people were working there for many of the early years of the decade.

SCHOOLS

1950 was the first year of a totally consolidated school. Every student went to the village school building for the first time ever. Transportation was provided by a full fledged "real" bus, a 1941-era Chevrolet, all painted yellow with professional "school bus" lettering. Harold Eastman, janitor and just about everything around the building, drove every route for the entire decade. These were the times when it was economically feasible to have the "good old school days" right here in Groton. Early fifties produced the Groton High School Hatch basketball team made up of Ralph, Dale, Donald, Clifford and Lorrey. This was not just a team in name. They could beat any team in

the league on any given night. Ralph and Cliff were shooters. Lorrey and Dale were good rebounders and Donald could bring the ball into the forecourt. The Hatch team was (rare as an all the same name team is) a bona fide winner.

The annual school budget nearly doubled during the decade, from a low of \$31,909.00 in 1950 to a high of \$60,555.00 in 1959.

The teaching staff was 8 each year except 1954 and 1958 when there were 9 faculty. The high school principalship was served by 5 people; Floyd Rising in 1950, Robert Ames in 1951-1952, Ernest Lyon in 1953-1955, John Lebergern in 1956-1958, and Ed Sanderson in 1959. School Superintendents were; J. Stewart Garvin through 1953, Paul Ross in 1954-1955, and Ernest Lyon for the rest of the decade.

State Aid to Education for the period rose from a low of \$10,711.00 in 1952 to \$15,236.00 in 1959. In reviewing the Superintendents. reports, the need for better lighting showed up in every one. Several mentions of the exemplary work ethic of cost

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savings were attributed to Harold Eastman. One quote stated that because Harold did the bus work along with the janitor work, the cost of transportation was held to one cent per pupil per mile. Indeed Harold Eastman was a giver. Superintendent reports started advocating the need for a new school as early as 1951, about 20 years before Blue Mt. Union was up and running.

Groton High School was part of the Hill Dale League consisting of Newbury, Wells River and Concord high schools, McIndoes and Peacham Academies, and St.Johnsbury Trade school, Baseball and basketball were the main sports and a big part of the schools extracurricular activities. Both, boys and girls teams were competitive with other similar sized schools. Coaching for the most part was handled by the teaching staff.

Music teachers during the period were Frances Frost, Betty Jane Lebegern, Lois Darby, Della Legare and Betty Daniels. They gave three lessons weekly; two for elementary and one for High School pupils. Performances included Christmas and spring

concerts and participation in the Hill Dale League Spring Concert.

One home bound student, Dean Williams, participated in classroom studies via a telephone hookup. An innovative move for a small school. A Boston reporter did a feature story on Dean's involvement in school from his home.

One act play contests were a league feature Groton participated in on an annual basis. A school newspaper, called the "Grotonian", gave out information for the community to get an eye into school life.

This proved to be the last full decade for Groton High School. The relatively small classes (10 to 14 graduates - see list of class members on page 10) coupled with increased costs were beginning to dictate the need for better ways to get the job done. By decades end, studies were underway in earnest by the Town of Groton (as well as surrounding towns) to come up with a solution. One large school utilized by several towns seemed to be the way to go. However, whether it should

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be just high school or all grades was something to grapple with. The next decade would work this out.

It is noteworthy to add this short emotional fact: There came a day (in a future decade) when the Groton school closed and the building fell into disrepair. The fire department was given permission to burn the building and use the site for the new fire station. A large scale "fire school", with nine or ten different departments participating, spent all one Saturday - first igniting and then putting out fires in various rooms using air packs - fog nozzles and up-to-date equipment. It was an "educational" day at the old school.

The final blaze was set by the Groton Fire Chief (Harold Puffer *-ed.*). He said, "I went into the home economics room alone and started the fire that would put the Groton School up in smoke. Walking out of that building that one last time, I thought of the twelve years of passing through those doors. It was a tearful departure from the old building I will never forget."

TOWN OFFICERS

MODERATOR:

John French, 1950
George Ricker rest of the decade

TOWN CLERK:

Lizzie Millis, 1950-1956,
Ida Dennis, 1957-1959

SELECTMEN:

1950, 1951 Herm Ricker,
Orlo Goodwin, John French
1951, 1953 Herm Ricker,
Gerald Morse, Bert Bailey
1954, 1955 Bert Bailey, Gerald
Morse, John French
Upon John French's death in
1956, Orlo Goodwin served with
Bert and Gerald through 1959.

LISTERS:

1950 George Welch, Earl
Welch, Ralph Evans
1951 through 1957 Ralph Evans,
Earl Welch, Herm Clark
1958, 1959 Earl Welch, Herm
Clark, George Welch
George Welch resigned to serve
as the last legislator representing
only Groton. He was replaced by
Freeland Achilles.

TREASURER:

Addie Ricker for the entire
decade.

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SCHOOL DIRECTORS:

1950, 1951 Everett Willey,
Addie Ricker, Stanley Hart,
1952 Nellie French replaced
Everett Willey.
1953-1958 Darius James joined
Nellie and Addie
1959 Nellie White replaced
Nellie French.

TAX COLLECTOR:

George Ricker for the decade.

ROAD COMMISSIONER:

1950 Kenneth Eastman
1951, 1952 Les Bixby.
1953-1959 Clifford Darling

AUDITORS:

People who served were:
P.T. White, Tom Eastman, Helen
Benzie, Ralph Foster, Lemira
Heath, Dot Main, Burnell Norris,
Wesley Schwartz, Raymond
Page, Clarence Welch, Ernest
Lyon, Marjorie Robitzer.

LIBRARY TRUSTEES:

Helene White, Minnie
Brown, Nellie Jeffry, Ida Ricker,
Dot Main, Joyce Frost, Adelaide
Lyon, Marion Morgan, Theresa
Vance, and Violet Ruitter.

Well, what should be noted
and highlighted about this ten

year period in our history?

The Montpelier-Wells River Railroad made it's last run and the rails were taken up, ending a period of history that brought much to Groton and has left us with nostalgic feelings. It was a great era when we heard the train whistle four, five, or six times every day; taking on water, blowing off steam, switching cars for the feed stores and pulpers, the mail coming in and going out. All this gone and we cherish the memories.

There were two or three restaurants, three grocery stores, six places to buy gasoline, two feed stores, and a creamery. The bobbin mill, and more than thirty farms shipping milk. Beckleys bus rolling through town twice a day. Farm tractors for sale on main street. Two places to get your car repaired.

It was a place of deer hunting fever every November with more stories at Whites and Henrys and Puffers than a teenager could take in.....some of them true. The Vermont transit en route from Portland, Maine to Burlington stopped at McLams IGA store.

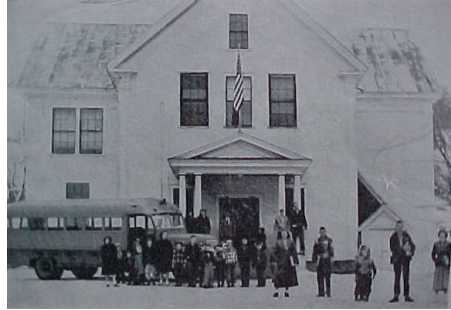
The Groton state

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SOME GROTON SCENES IN THE FIFTIES 1950 - 1959



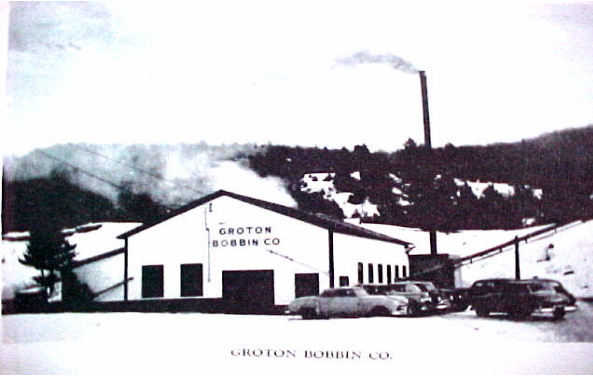
The M&WRRailroad ceased operations



Groton Village School in the Fifties

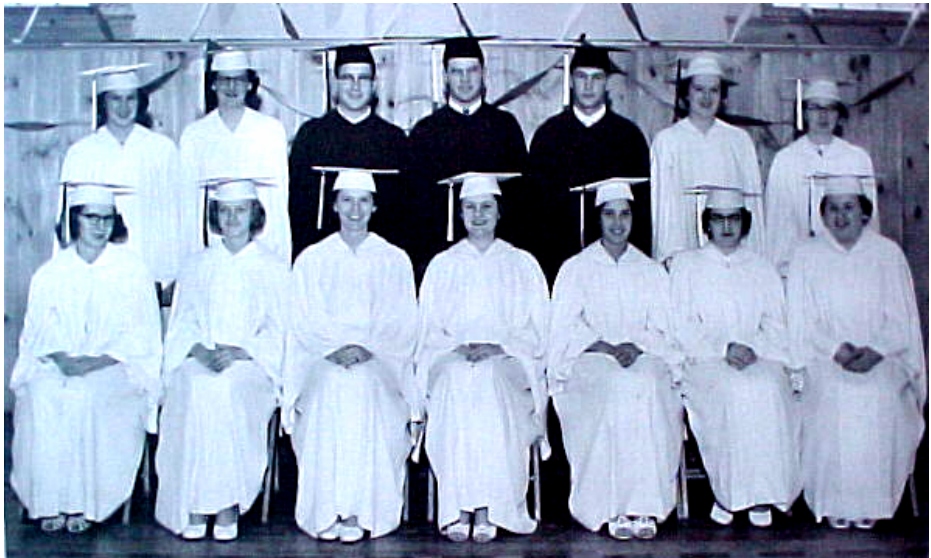


1954 Girls Basketball Team



**Groton Bobbin Company rebuilt by John French
after 1947 fire was a major industry in Groton in
the Fifties**

**County Senator
1953
Mr. John French**



1955 Senior High School Class

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forest road was still dirt and a lot at Groton Pond went for \$75.00.

It was a time when most

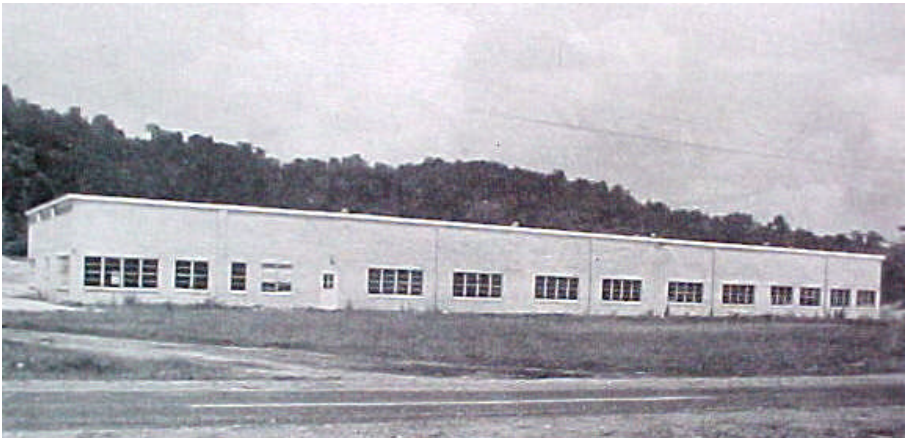
Groton people, "true to form" had their garages full of junk and their cars wouldn't start on many of the cold winter mornings.

Taking all the decades in perspective the 1950's were as good as any.



“Batches of Hatch’s”

Left to right: Donald, Ralph, Dale, Lorrey and Clifford Hatch the starting 5 for Groton High School Basket Ball team in the 1950’s.



Haldane of Groton, Inc. built this factory west of the village in 1947 and it was the home of Luce Mfg. Company in the 1950’s.

FAMILY RECORDS UPDATE

Information about individuals in the 1930 census recently became available to the public, 72 years after it was collected. There were 15 censuses of Groton, from 1790 to 1930, and we have photocopies of all but 1890, which were destroyed by fire in the 1920's.

The handwritten records are being transcribed into computer files and are posted on the **Groton Historical Society web page** as they are completed. So far the 1930 census enumerated by George Blanchard, the 1920 enumerated by Burton Brown, and 1910 enumerated by Fred White have been posted along with the first 3 censuses (1790, 1800 and 1810) posted earlier by Jim Dresser, the web site editor. Working backwards from 1930 makes it easier to decipher the handwriting of the enumerators, as many of the names are familiar and the writing styles are more contemporary with today.

We will be able to include all the Groton families that were enumerated by the census takers, but will only have the family genealogy for those that have

submitted their records.

The Groton Family records are being arranged in order of their first appearance in the census records. For example the 1790 census listed 7 family names: Abbott, Bailey, Darling, Hosmer, James, Morse, and Townshend. All but Townshend are represented in the Groton Family records, but some families of James and Morse in our records are not connected to the earlier settlers.

Twenty four additional family names appear in the 1800 census and only 2 are not in our records, but several are not connected to the early settlers. And 30 new names are in the 1810 census.

Jim Dresser is compiling the burial records for all the Groton cemeteries and posting them on the web site.

The Groton Historical Society web site is being maintained by Jim Dresser with the help of Don Smith. You can visit the web site on the internet at the address listed in the box below.



VISIT THE GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY WEB SITE

<http://homepages.together.net/~jdresser/GrotonHistSoc.html>

GROTON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

(*Denotes deceased)

1950

Charlotte Benzie, Dale Darling,
*Eva Davis, Leslie Edwards, Clara
Hatch, Robert McDonald, Christie
Murray, Evelyn Page, *Eric Sayers,
Viola Whitehill.

1951

Patricia Bain, Walter Blodgett,
Kenneth Brown, Durwood French,
*Vern Frost, Jr., Lona Gandin,
Norman Morse, Hazel Sayers, Anita
Vance, Lamona Vance, Leona
Welch.

1952

Alice Achilles, *Shirley Barnes,
James Crown, Florence Darling,
Clarence Williams, Frances Frost,
Carol Dickey, Harvey Dean, Robert
Eastman, Linnie Welch, John
Welch, Madelyn Page, Leverett
Welch.

1953

Ellen Ashford, Laura Avery, Lottie
Batchelder, Juelle Eastman,
Katherine Eastman, Myrna Frost,
Clifford Hatch, *Donald Hatch,
Coreen Wells, Evelyn Whitehill.

1954

Patricia Bailey, Donald Darling,
Hilda Dean, Dixie Dickey, Elaine
Frost, Lorrey Hatch, Minola Heath,
Frances Ricker, Scott Sayers, Bruce
Wells.

1955

Ruth Achilles, Beverly Bain, Janet
Benzie, Ruth Crown, Marilyn
Evans, Anita Gandin, Robert
Garland, Marilyn Hatch, Donald
Orr, Harold Puffer, Shirley
Sayers, Donna Welch, Betty
Whitehill, Phyllis Williams.

1956

Lois Bailey, Stanley Crown,
Charles Frost, Phyllis Hatch, Don
Hood, Betty Mitchell, Mary
Ricker, Henry Sanville, Arthur
Shields, Edna Welch.

1957

Claudette Beaulieu, *George
Dickey, H. Buzzy Eastman,
Marilyn Gray, Delia Heath,
Herbert Orr, Betty Playful, Joyce
Hart, Carolyn Ranney, Marjorie
Robitzer, Hollis Vance, Bruce
Whitehill.

1958

*Loren Daniels, Wendell
Darling, Ann Main, Janice
Hatch, *Gerald Pierce, Creston
Ruiter, Linda Whitehill.

1959

*George Austin, Nannetta Crown,
Donna Gandin, *Guy "Duane"
Haskell, Gordon Page, Gracelyn
Ricker, Myrna Ruiter, Richard
Vance, *Jacklyn White.

MILITARY VETERANS DURING KOREAN WAR

June 1950 - July 1953

Benzie, Willard
Darling, Dale
Darling, Harold
Davis, Joe

Eastman, Bob
Eastman, Vernald
Edwards, Les
Page, Deane

Page, Dick
Palmer, Bill
Puffer, Gordon
Vinton, Burnell

Help !!!

This list of names provided by Deane Page from memory. Gordon and Burnell were added by the editor. If you can add to it please submit the names to GHS. Diane Kreis found a list of Korean War Veterans at the Town Clerks office, but was unable to obtain it in time for this Newsletter.



1950-51 Groton High School students



Home of the Groton Historical Society Groton, Vermont
Peter Paul House built in 1840

Groton Historical Society Newsletter
J. W. Benzie, Editor
P. O. Box 209
Groton, VT 05046-0209

