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# GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

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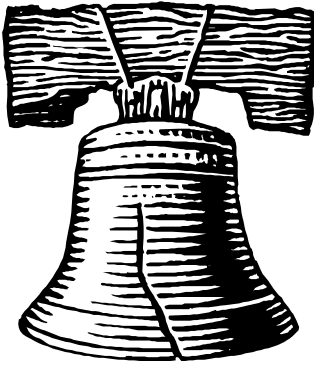
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# LET FREEDOM RING



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## Let Freedom Ring

By Will Power

Independence Day seems like a good time to take a sobering look at “Freedom”, a look beyond the parades, fireworks, picnics, parties and general hoopla, to see what it is that we are celebrating. Two sides of the coin are freedom to, and freedom from. Freedom to do what you want to do and freedom from having to do what someone else wants you to do. According to philosopher Alfred North Whitehead in his writing on the adventures of ideas, “The essence of freedom is the practicability of purpose.” The more practical your purpose, the more freedom you perceive. For example if your purpose is to help your neighbors and provide for the needs of others, you will experience freedom when you are able

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## OFFICERS

President	Richard Brooks
Vice President	Deane Page
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Treasurer	Joan Haskell
Web Site Editor	James Dresser
Newsletter Editor	Willard Benzie

## MEETING SCHEDULE

(second Tuesday)

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

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to contribute toward that purpose. Because there is so much to do and so little time to do it, priorities must be set. A very practical priority is to put GOD first, everyone else second and yourself last.

Individual freedoms in the United States are protected by the “Bill of Rights,” the first 10 amendments to the Constitution. These rights, or freedoms, were insisted upon by several States before they would ratify the Constitution. Included are the freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom to bear arms. But the pursuit of any freedom does not include the right to infringe upon the rights of others, so the government has passed laws restricting or regulating some freedoms. Legally individuals can do anything that is not prohibited by law, but the government can only do things that are permitted by law. And any law that does not conform to the Constitution will be struck down by the courts as unconstitutional.

Norman Vincent Peale, in his writing about “self-control”, observed that laws to regulate our behavior, unlike the laws of nature, will not work unless we exercise self-control.

*A rabbit hopped out into the road, then skittered into the bushes. In the distance an owl hooted softly. The moon was high in the sky. For millions of years it has been circling the earth. Even its eclipses are predictable.*

*Through the trees, lights shine from neighbors’ houses. In them are human beings like us, worried sometimes, groping for answers. There is nothing completely*

*predictable about the life of any of us, none of the certainty that governs the rest of nature. The moon obeys the laws of gravity. The rabbit in the road was controlled by instinct. So was the owl that might swoop down on the rabbit. But human beings are given freedom of choice. They alone can change the direction of their future, because God has given them free will.*

This freedom – is it possible that in rebelling against the authority restraints, some people are neglecting their own inner controls? That might explain the current acts of terrorism and the degeneration of morality, these harmful, selfish acts that distress all thinking, God-fearing people.

Remember the story about the founders of our nation coming out from the final session dealing with the Constitution, and someone in the waiting crowd surrounding Benjamin Franklin asked, “What have you given us?” “A republic,” answered Ben, “if you can keep it.”

This wise old statesman meant that a republic with individual freedom is such a delicately balanced form of government that whether or not it survives depends entirely on its citizens. Not on how much prosperity and security they have. But on their intelligence, energy, selflessness, honesty, toughness, vigilance and patriotism – in other words their **character of purpose.**

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## INDIAN TRAIL AND GLOUCESTER COUNTY ROAD

By Hosea N. Welch (1860-1941)

Long before the white man ever saw this country the American Indian had settled here, and by their long continued habit of wandering through the forests, gathering herbs, hunting for game, camping here and there by the brooks, rivers and ponds, they had established villages and well beaten trails to all sections of the country.

The main trails that crossed the state of Vermont from east to west, led from Coos on the Connecticut River to Pe-ton-don-que, or Lake Champlain. Leaving the Indian village of Coos, in Newbury, VT, it followed up the Connecticut and crossed the Cowassuck or Wells River, several rods above its outlet into the Connecticut River. About a mile from the crossing the trail divided, one part leading north, while the main trail turned to the west, keeping on the dry ground about a mile north from the river, passing up and down over the hills, crossing the valleys, fording the brooks and rivers, and following nearly a straight course to the foot of Groton Pond, at what is now Ricker Mills. Here was a nice camping place, in the

shade of pine trees, with cool spring water to refresh the traveler's thirst, and a natural landing place on the pond for canoes, and many a gay Indian party has been held here. From here the trail kept westerly, passing the height of land on the north side of Knox mountain, then passing down through Plainfield, crossed the Winooski River and followed the north side of the river to the lake.

All the rivers along the middle of the Connecticut River end with "suck" and the French called the Indians who lived in this locality "Suck Indians". The English called them "Coossucks". The Coossucks were a tribe of the Pequot or Pequod Nation but were broken up so soon after the settlement of New England that little mention is made of them. The location of Coos is described by David Johnson in the history of Coos county as follows. "On the high ground east of the mouth of Cow Meadow Brook, and south of

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### GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY WEB PAGE

Go to [GrotonVT.com](http://GrotonVT.com) and click the link to the Historical Society

Ben Franklin was aware of the danger in a free society that if the citizenry gets too lax, too soft, too self-satisfied, too indifferent, then they might lose their freedom.

Some people think we can solve many of our problems by recruiting more and more law-enforcement officers. But events in other parts of the World show what utter failures police states have been throughout history.

So the answer to keeping our freedom is: convincing citizens that they have to restrain themselves. They need to be shown how to do this, and helped to do it, so they can experience this exciting way of freedom in their life. Not by imposed restrictions, but by self-control and self-discipline.

Freedom of choice is at the heart of all morality. It is not the lock on the door or the policeman on the beat that prevents a

burglar from breaking into a house – although they may be deterrents. The choice is really up to the burglar. If his inner restraints do not restrain him, he is going to make the attempt to burglarize.

Most of us never contemplate burglary or other serious crimes, but we all face moral choices. It is precisely this freedom to do right or wrong that makes doing right an exhilarating and strengthening thing.

“Why not control your life, why not be master of your habits, why not know the joy and satisfaction of self-discipline?” Individual self-discipline and self-control are our best hopes to preserve the values and freedoms we Americans cherish.

**Happy Independence Day!!!**



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the three large projecting rocks, were found many indications of an old and extensive Indian settlement.”

On the meadow, forty or fifty rods below, near the rocks in the river, was evidently a burying ground. The remains of many of the sons of the forest are there deposited.

When this country was first settled by the English, the Connecticut valley was occupied by the Pequot Indians and their land extended on the west to Lake Champlain. The Pequots was a large nation with more than twenty tribes, each tribe having its Sachem, or Chief. Their main seat of government was at Mystic, near the mouth of the Connecticut River. Mystic was destroyed by the English in 1637.

The Coossuck Indians were broken up and their village Coos burned during King Phillips' War in 1676. While some of their warriors were engaged with King Phillips' War, the Iroquois came across the lake and over this trail and swooped down on Coos, burned the village, and captured many prisoners with their Chief Peskaret. They were taken back across the lake and adopted into the Iroquois Nation. The rest of the Coossucks were scattered and eventually drifted north and united with the St. Francis Indians in Canada. The Indians never had a permanent settlement there after this, but often spent the summer there, returning to their new

home in the fall.

The St. Francis Indians were made up of remnants of several different tribes with their headquarters at Francois, or Three Rivers in Canada. They also had a village in northwest Vermont, near Swanton, called Massiskow. They were naturally grieved and blamed the English for all their troubles, but the form of retaliation, that some of them used, made matters worse. Very often small parties of Indians would come up the lake and down over the trail, taking a look at their old home and then sly down on some new settlement, burn, capture and massacre what they could, and then hurry back with their plunder, leaving a sad frontier story behind them. For nearly one hundred years they continued to harass the frontier of Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts. During this same time England and France were in a bad humor and every few years they would declare war with each other. These wars were conveyed to the colonies. At such times the French army in Canada would unite with the Indians and come down over this same route to attack the English in New England. The English settlement had erected forts all along the frontier for their protection and sometimes these forts were successful in defending their position and sometimes they were outwitted and destroyed.

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1984 Tractor Parade in Groton



Cub Scouts riding on Groton’s new Fire Truck in the 1984 parade



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In 1689 the War of William and Queen Anne broke out. During this war the French and Indians united and made several attacks on the New England settlement. In 1699 a treaty was concluded and peace prevailed for a short time, but this was soon broken and another war was declared. In 1704 Rouille with 340 French and Indians came up Lake Champlain on the ice and passed over this trail to Coos on snowshoes. From Coos they went down the Connecticut river and Feb. 22, 1704 sacked and burned Deerfield in Massachusetts, killed forty of the inhabitants and took one hundred and twelve captives, men women and children, with their pastor, Rev. John Williams. They returned over the same route bringing all the plunder they could carry and draw on sleds, including the old church bell. The French soldiers and Indians are said to have clanged the old bell with great pomp and cheer while going down the Winooski river. This bell can still be seen at Three Rivers.

In May 1709 Captain Wright of Northampton with several English and two Natick Indians adventured to the lake, within forty miles of Fort LaMotte, killed and wounded two or three of the French Mohawks, and on their return up French River (Winooski) met with another body of the enemy in canoes, on whom they fired, and overset, killing and wounding several of them. In this

company was William Moody, a captive they were taking to Canada. In trying to rescue Moody from the water, Lieutenant John Wells was killed and John Strong was wounded. Wells River was named from this event. Moody felt so bad about the death of John Wells he gave himself up to the Indians, who burned him at the stake. This was the first English scouting party that ever passed over this trail.

In 1713 another treaty was formed. Peace prevailed for awhile and the New England settlement pushed northward with considerable rapidity, but this was soon broken and bands of French and Indians began to harass the New England settlements. In 1724 Captain Thomas Wells ascended the Connecticut on horse back, but the history does not say how far he went.

In 1725 a scouting party was sent out from Massachusetts under the command of Captain Benjamin Wright. They left Northfield July 27 and came up the Connecticut river as far as the mouth of Wells River. Hiding their boats and provisions here they started up this trail and August 11 arrived within the present limits of Groton. The next day they reached Groton Pond and camped at the head of the lake that night. The next day they continued their journey toward Lake Champlain,

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arriving there on August 23. Their return trip took from August 25 to September 2.

In 1747 four hundred French and Indians under the command of Mons. Debeline came up the lake and over this trail on snowshoes and went down the Connecticut river to Charlestown, NH. Scouts had warned the inhabitants of their approach and they abandoned the settlement, and Captain Phineas Stevens was ordered to occupy the fort with thirty men. On the fourth of April he was surrounded by the invaders and the battle was soon begun. Every building around the fort was set on fire and war hoops resounded from all directions. The fort was assaulted time after time but the attack was as often repulsed with great loss to the French and Indians. The attack continued with increasing fury until the end of the third day when the enemy withdrew and returned to Canada. Captain Stevens was left in possession of the fort without the loss of a single man. For his gallantry, Sir Charles Knowles presented him with an elegant sword, and from this circumstance the township was named Charlestown when it was incorporated in 1753.

In the spring of 1752 John Stark, afterward General Stark, Amos Eastman, David Stinson and William Stark were hunting up on Barker's River in NH when they were surprised by a party of ten Indians. John Stark and Amos

Eastman were captured and taken to the headquarters of the St. Francis tribe in Canada and were led through the Coos meadows and over this trail. They returned in the summer.

The Honorable Horace W. Bailey wrote in the History of Lake Champlain, "It was here from this lake, by the way of the rivers emptying into it, that the French and Indian had well trodden paths over the Green Mountains into the Connecticut and Merrimack valleys for the purpose of attacking the unprotected frontier settlement in New England." This description can well be applied to this trail, which had been in use so much, by the Indians, the French and Indians, and later by the English, that it became as well known in military circles as the railroads and wagon roads are today.

The French and Indian troubles in this section of the country were brought to an end at the close of the old French and Indian War which broke out in 1758, and ended with the capture of Quebec in 1759 and Montreal in 1760, and the treaty of Paris in 1763, which made Canada English territory.

This trail was in use quite a lot during the controversy between New York and New Hampshire over the ownership of Vermont. As some of the towns east of Groton had taken charters under both parties the eastern part of the state was laid off as "Gloucester County, New York."

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and communications were often carried on over this trail. Survey parties were working in this locality and quite a large part of Gloucester County was surveyed, by New York authorities. A road was surveyed from Newbury to Lake Champlain which followed the old Indian trail. In 1774 considerable work was done on the east end of this road.

The Allens, leading figures in the Continental government, soon caught on to this movement and began operations to prevent it. In 1773 they erected a fort at the mouth of the Winooski River, with 32 port holes in the upper story, and called it Fort Fredrick. This made the road disputed property, but no real violence occurred on the road at this time.

During the Revolutionary War scouting parties from both sides often passed over this road. The party that burned Royalton in 1780 are said to have come over this road with 320 British soldiers under the command of Lieutenant Horton, intending to go to Newbury, but learning that Newbury people were prepared for them, changed their course for Royalton.

In 1782 a British scouting party from Canada, about 20 in number, came over this trail and after annoying the settlers of Newbury, proceeded to Corinth, where they compelled the settlers to take the oath of allegiance to the British King.

The Newbury scouts, Joe Indian and others, used this trail more

or less but were evidently very sly and avoided being ambushed, but the information they returned to General Hazen and General Bailey may have been very useful to their knowledge of what was going on in the British army.

There is a tradition current in town, that a man by the name of Shattock, and two or three others, built a block house of hewed timber on the summit, north of Knox Mt. and cleared some land around it. As no date or purpose is attached to this story it is evidently connected with some of the early events of this territory. Perhaps some military doings or a stopping place for travelers.

Another story that has been handed down from the early settlers is that three soldiers who had been discharged from service, somewhere on Lake Champlain, or in Canada, passed over this route on their way home. They are said to have had eight hundred dollars apiece in money with them. They were unfortunate however and after traveling a while on their way one of them was taken sick. They laid by, thinking he would be better, but instead he turned worse and died. The other two buried the body and taking his share of the money they hurried along. In a short time another one was taken sick, and again they laid by, but he grew worse and died. He was buried by his companion who then

proceeded on his way, taking all the money with him. He had not gone very far when he was taken sick. When he got so weak he could not carry the money, he buried it at the roots of a big pine tree, on the first flat this side of the pond. He continued to struggle along walking, resting and crawling until he arrived home, where he told his story, but soon died. His people sometime afterwards came back over the same route, trying to find the money, but were unable to locate the place where he buried it.

Prince Edward of England, Duke of York, the father of Queen Victoria, stayed overnight at Col. Jacob Davis' at Montpelier on his way from Montreal to Boston, in the winter of 1789 or 90. Some older people say that a small troop of horses went down over this road in the early days, but that's all they seem to know about it. It may have been connected with this same event. If so, His Majesty was the most noted person that ever passed over this road.

James Marsh, the first settler in Waterbury, passed over this road several times in 1783, 1784 and 1785. One time he came to Coos for supplies and carried home a bushel of cornmeal on his back.

After learning about the different parties that have used this trail at different periods of time, one

can picture in their mind a good many things that may have been true, some pleasant, others sad, and all strange and odd to the present generation. Think of a large band of Indians moving along this trail, carrying their canoes and camping outfit to spend a week or a month at the pond or at Lake Champlain. And again perhaps a war party returning with their booty and captives to be sold into slavery or held for ransom. Such an outfit would be strung out along the trail for nearly a mile. And after these events have passed into oblivion we see a new class of people disputing over the ownership of this same territory. And we also read about the Independent Government of Vermont. But I will leave these things for your own imagination. Some people think it is enough just to say it is an Old Indian Trail.



Charlton, Willard, Janet, Dad & Melvin 1939

Which way is the trail?



Home of the Groton Historical Society built in 1840  
Purchased in 1989 and renovated by the Society  
for storing and displaying Historical records and artifacts

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