
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Volume 15 Issue 1

Groton, Vermont 05046

Winter 2002

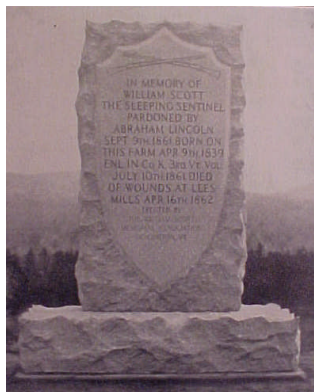
REVIEW OF GROTON, VERMONT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This is the fourth in a planned series of articles on Groton in the twentieth century. The fourth decade - the 'thirties' - from 1930 through 1939 is gleaned mainly from The Groton Town Reports and Mr. Glover's Groton published by the Society.

The editor

TWENTIETH CENTURY GROTON The Fourth Decade 1930 - 1939

The New York stock market crash on October 29, 1929 was the beginning of the Great Depression of the 1930's. Although Groton was not a large financial center, the depression did impact it's citizens. The Overseer of the Poor was responsible to see that families and "tramps" (transient individuals), had food and shelter. Between 10 and 28 families were provided some help each year, averaging more than 20 per year for the decade. More than 120 tramps were helped annually in Groton early in the decade, but this gradually decreased to only 55 receiving aide from the Overseer of the Poor in 1939. The Town Reports of the 1930's lists the transients as "tramps", but later in the decade they were more commonly known as "hobos", a contraction of the words *hoe boys*, a name given to the unemployed men who grabbed their hoes and hopped a freight train to go looking for work on farms during the depression. Many individuals passing through Groton would stop at a prosperous looking farm house and offer to split wood or do other chores for a meal.



William Scott Memorial - 1936

OFFICERS

President	Richard Brooks
Vice President	Norma Hosmer
Secretary	Diane Kreis
Treasurer	Joan Haskell

MEETING SCHEDULE (second Tuesday)

March through November
10 AM at the

Peter Paul House, 253 Scott Hwy.

(Continued from page 1)

A major fire in the 1930's was Smith's Drug Store and the adjacent dwelling which burned in February.

McLure's Student Band, Groton, VT was organized in 1932 and played weekly concerts during the summer months in Groton, Wells River, Newbury, Fairlee and at several fairs each fall, including the Wells River Valley Fair held each year during the decade in Groton.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt defeated President Herbert Hoover easily in 1932 on the basis of his plans to end the depression. The success of his programs was reflected in his reelection sweep of all states except Maine and Vermont in 1936.

Also in 1936 there was another damaging flood, although not as severe as the 1927 flood, it prompted the building of flood control dams like the one in East Barre. Another project made possible by the federal aid programs was paving of U.S. Highway 302 through Groton. Improved highways brought bus service to Groton by Beckley Bus Service and Vermont Transit. The Montpelier & Wells River Railroad operated four trains a day stopping at the Groton Depot for passengers, freight and mail.

George Millis was the Groton Postmaster the first half of the decade and George Clark the last half. Roy Hanchett, James Benzie and Walter Main were the rural mail carriers delivering mail from the Groton post office in the 1930's.

War was looming on the horizon with Japan and China already fighting in 1937 and in September 1939 the start of World War II in Europe. Lend lease programs to help our allies stimulated the economy, and our efforts to produce war materials brought us out of the depression by the end of the decade.

Baptist ministers in Groton during the decade were Rev. Hudson, 1930, and Rev. E. H. Nickerson, 1932. Methodist ministers were Rev. Alba M. Markey, 1930, Rev. George C. McDonald, 1934, Rev. Arthur A. Mandigo, 1936, and Rev. N. Harlan Scott, 1938.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

President Herbert Hoover established the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to try and rebuild the economy, but it wasn't used extensively until President Franklin D. Roosevelt's *New Deal* employed it to extend large credit to railroads, building-loan companies, banks, agricultural-credit corporations, and insurance companies. The federal government raised money to finance these programs by increasing taxes and borrowing. The public debt increased from \$22.5 billion in 1933 to \$40.44 billion

in 1939. The New Deal programs greatly enlarged the Federal Governments role in the economic and social life of Groton and the whole nation.

Some of these changes included the repeal of the 18th amendment to the constitution, when 36 states ratified the 21st amendment, giving control of liquor traffic back to the individual states in 1933. Devaluation of the dollar in 1934 when the country went off the gold standard, and the dollar dropped to 59 % of its former value, in an effort to stabilize the dollar in the world market. Creation of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to insure bank deposits and restore people's confidence in the banks again. And the establishment of many federal programs and agencies in an effort to reduce unemployment and regain prosperity, such as the CCC, FHA, TVA, NIRA, PWA, NRA, REA, NLRA, WPA, SSA, and in 1938 the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) which mandated maximum hours and minimum wages for most categories of workers. Although the New Deal programs failed to stimulate full economic recovery, they expanded the role of the federal government in economic regulation, resource development, and income maintenance.

CCC

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was established in April 1933 by the U. S. Congress for the conservation of natural resources of the country - timber, soil, and water - and to provide employment and training for unemployed young men as long as the depression lasted. Unemployed and unmarried men between the ages of 17 and 23 could enroll. They received a base pay of \$30 per month and lived in work camps. It was required that \$25 of their monthly pay be sent home to provide for the family. One camp, the 146th Company was located in Groton at the Groton State Forest in June 1933. Besides the reforestation and recreation projects, they built Forest Highway 232 connecting U. S. 2 and U. S. 302. The men worked 6 hours a day and received 2 hours of training. Many enrollees learned to read and write, obtained diplomas, or learned a trade while in the CCC camp. Weekend trips to see a show or attend a dance were a challenge to the enrollees, as having a car at camp was forbidden. The local girls were more interested in boys in their CCC uniforms, which no doubt prompted some Groton boys to enroll in the State Forest camp.

FAIRS AND DANCES

The Wells River Valley Fair Association built a bandstand, temporary sheds for livestock, and an exhibition hall on the fair grounds (now the site of Northeastern Log Homes). Weekly dances were held on Saturday nights in the hall, known as the Rock Maple Ballroom, to provide entertainment for the young men at the CCC camp in Groton State Forest, and to raise funds for the annual fair. Carol Ricker built a motorized crystal ball with mirrors, which reflected colored lights shining on it from the four corners of the dance hall. The dance floor was made of rock maple flooring laid in a circular pattern. Many different dance bands played, including Lester Freer's, Henry Ashford's, and Dave White's to name a few. The good music and excellent facilities, which included a lunch room, attracted large crowds. The end of prohibition also brought alcoholic beverages to the dances, but since Groton was "dry" they were not allowed in the building and had to be consumed outside, usually in a motor vehicle. The local WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union) objected to the dances because of the drinking and some lively debates took place with the Wells River Valley Fair Association which tried to control the drinking by hiring constables to patrol both inside and outside the dance hall.

The annual community fairs started by Groton Grange No. 443 were continued in the 1930's by the Wells River Valley Fair Association. Fair programs included a parade of Floats, Horribles, Bicycles, and Children lead by McLure's Student Band. The band also played a concert and performed marching drills. Baseball and softball games were played and many other sports activities were held, such as bicycle races, 3-legged races, and 50-yard dashes. Some years contests were held to catch a rooster or a greased pig. And money was attached to the top of a greased pole for the lucky person who could reach it. Floral Hall exhibits included Fancy Work, Flowers, Vegetables, Cakes, Canned Foods, Maple Sugar, Dolls, Birds, 4-H Clubs, and Art. There was a dance held in the evening and some years there was a Style Show and Folk Dances. An oldfashioned baked bean dinner was served in the building at the entrance to the fair grounds a few years. Several years a hot air balloon was inflated and the exhibitionist ascended over the fair grounds and parachuted down to thrill the crowd. After dark a firework display entertained the fairgoers before the dancing began.

SCHOOLS

One hundred forty seven pupils graduated from Groton High School in the 1930's. (See list of graduates on p 6) In addition to the

village school, there were 3 rural schools in 1930; Westville, South, and Plummer. Plummer school closed after the 1931-32 school year and the South school after the 1938-39 school year. J. Stewart Garvin was the superintendent and three teachers; Lillian Garvin, Nora Tillotson, and Thelma Johnson Donald, taught school the entire decade. Ida M. Ricker taught from 1930 to 1938; Alice Lord Goodine, Cora Kennedy, and Della Frost from 1930 to 1936; Minnie Lang, Warren Dodge, and Evelyn H. Wilder from 1930-33. Seven teachers did not return after the 1930-31 school year; Mildred Hood, L. R. Rowe, Dorothy Strong, Mildred Wise, Marjory Potter, Florence Adams, and Margaret Blanchard. Other teachers in the 1930's were Irma Renfrew, 1931-32; Kenneth Garvin, 1932-40; Crawford Adams, 1932-35; Vera Frost, 1932-34; Clifford McLure, 1934-37; William E. Dorn and Esther Dunham, 1935-37; Elmer Page, 1935-40; Charles Boright, 1936-40; Dustin White, 1936-38; Doris Hosmer, Lloyd Williams, and Mrs. Russell Nims, 1936-37; Doris Steele and Grace Chamberlain, 1937-40; Bernice Main, 1937-38; Murdena Thurston, 1938-39; and Howard Russell and Adine Farwell, 1939-40. There were 10 teachers the first 2 years of the decade and 9 each year after except the last, 1939-40, when there were only 8 1/2. Mr. Russell was hired half-time to teach agriculture and shop. Total students in all Groton schools dropped from 224 in 1930 to 194 by the end of the decade.

Slate blackboards were installed in 1933. Jack Jones was the janitor at the village school and Willie Welch was the truant officer. Cad Hendry became janitor in 1934 for the rest of the decade. Services of a school nurse, Mrs. Armstrong, were available in the 1934-35 school year. And starting in 1935-36 school year text books were furnished by the school. In 1936 Home Economics was added with Doris Hosmer as the teacher. Also starting in 1936 the Home Ec teacher and Miss Mary Main put on hot lunches for the pupils. Groton schools joined with Newbury, Ryegate, Orange, and Wells River in a Caledonia-Orange School District with J. Stewart Garvin as Superintendent in 1937. Agriculture and shop classes were added in 1939 when Howard Russell was hired one-half time. Home Economics and Agriculture and Shop teachers were supported partially by federal aid. The school tax in Groton steadily decreased during the decade. The schools received 36% less from local taxes in 1937-38 than they got a decade earlier. However, *(continued on page 7)*

GROTON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

1930

Anna Hood, Clara Hood, Ethel James,
Robert Pillsbury.

1931

Edith Bartlett, John Crown, Guy
Darling, Esther Eastman, Clifton Fifield,
Ruth Goodwin, Paul Heath, Morris
Keenan, Bernice Main, Ralph Page,
Dwight Renfrew, Warren Welch, Harry
Williams.

1932

Gwendolen Caldwell, Kenneth Eastman,
Lucille Eastman, Ralph Evans, Glenn
Haskell, Helen Hertz, Margaret James,
Doris Keenan, Jennie Lund, Elizabeth
McLam, Elmer Page, Leona Page, Mary
Page, Alice Welch, Carlos Welch, Seth
Welch.

1933

Gordon Boomhower, Trafford Brink,
Celile Carpenter, Dorothy Carpenter,
Emma Daniels, Edward Evans, Donald
Foley, Edwin Goodwin, Florence
Grapes, Theresa Legare, Lona Main,
Walter Main, Mary McLam, Howard
Page, Roderick Pillsbury, Dorothy
Putnam, Edmund Ricker, Roland Steele,
Harry Welch, Philip T. White.

1934

Elizabeth Brock, Jackson Carpenter,
Kendall Carpenter, Clarence Eastman,
Sophrozia Emerson, Stanley Fifield,
Dorothy Foster, Thelma Hood, Esther
Lee, Loren McAllister, Annie Murray,
Carlene Page, Nellie M. Roberts, Evelyn
Taplin, Murdena Thurston, Robert
Welch.

1935

Doris Armstrong, James Beaton, Dale
Brown, Faye Converse, Clara Daniels,
Paul Frost, Frances Gibson, Doris

Goodwin, Faustina Hood, Pauline
Hood, Lyle Mason, Gordon McLam,
Gordon Page, Sylvanus Thurston.

1936

Kenneth Brock, Robert Brock,
Dwight Carpenter, Roland Daniels,
Clifford Darling, Bernard Doe,
Dorothy Eastman, Franklin Emerson,
Elsie Emery, Vera Fifield, Patrenle
Fitzgerald, Jean Foster, Mary I. Main,
Mary E. Main, Pauline McLam,
Hazel McQueen, Austin Morrison,
Cedric Newton, Elizabeth Page, Pearl
Phelps, James Rouhan, Albert
Shepard, Andrew Smith, Edith
Wright, .

1937

Martha Foster, Milo Furman, Arlene
Gibson, Faye Haskell, Madeline
Hood, Casper Lyford, Russell Page,
Elizabeth Welch.

1938

Louise Doe, Lloyd Eastman, Irving
Evans, Franklin Ingram, Hazen
Keenan, Frederick Miller, Phyllis
Moulton, Wendeline Moulton, Irene
Page, Pearl Ricker, Stanley Welch,
Mildred Thurston, Ida Welch,
Elizabeth Will.

1939

Phyllis Caldwell, Merle Crown,
Gerald Darling, Newton Darling,
Ercil Davis, Bernadine Eastman,
Ernest Eggleston, Ralph Gibson,
Priscilla Goodwin, Warren Goodwin,
Horace Hood, Carolyn Hooper,
Chester McLam, Theresa McQueen,
Helene Moulton, Thomas Olsen,
Florence Page, Phoebe Taisey.

Continued from page 3)

increased state aid and the large number of tuition pupils made it possible to (make needed improvements and keep expenses within receipts.

WILLIAM SCOTT

The William Scott Memorial Association raised enough money to erect a granite monument in 1936 in memory of the Sleeping Sentinel near the site of his home on U. S. Highway 302 about four miles west of Groton village. McLure's Student Band of Groton played at the dedication.

William Scott was one of five brothers who enlisted in the Union Army: Daniel, George, John, Joseph and William. William enlisted as a private in Company K, Third Vermont Regiment at Montpelier, July 10, 1861. The regiment was mustered into service of the United States at St. Johnsbury, and reached Washington July 26, and went to Camp Lyon at the head of Chain Bridge on the Potomac. He was doing double sentinel duty because his friend who had duty before him was sick and on the morning of August 31, he was found asleep at his post. At his court-martial he was found guilty and sentenced to be shot on Monday, September 9, 1861. He was pardoned by President Lincoln. In the engagement at Lee's Mill he was mortally wounded with six bullets in his body and died on April 16, 1862. Two of his brothers also died in the service.

TOWN OFFICERS

Seven men served the town as selectmen in the thirties; 1930 - C. J. Bailey, 10 years; H. M. Ricker, 8; and G. M. Vance one; 1931 - N. H. Whitehill, 1934 - J. W. Main, and 1937 - John W. French, 3 years each; and 1938 - Gerald Morse, 2 years. Helen M. Benzie was treasurer for 2 years and in 1932-35, P. A. Smith served as both town clerk and treasurer. The last half of the decade G. M. Millis served as town clerk and treasurer. Road commissioners were L. P. Bowles, Calvin Darling, and Bert Bailey. Overseer of the poor was Loren G. Welch 1930, Bert Hood 1931, Fred Frost 1934, Mrs. Fred (Verge) Frost 1936, and P. Stanley Taisey 1939.

BUSINESS

Most business ventures in Groton during the decade survived the depression, but it was a struggle. There wasn't much money available, so many transactions required the

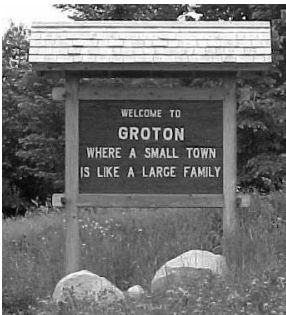
trust of individuals. Neighbors helped neighbors and the merchants carried many families through tough times with extended credit. Many Groton families displayed the Vermont heritage of self-reliance and took pretty good care of themselves and their neighbors.

The Groton businesses that were operating in 1939 and advertised in the Groton Community Fair program provide a view of activity in town. More than one third of the 75 advertisements in the program were by Groton residents and the rest did business with people in Groton. John K. White sold general merchandise and roofing plus Mobilgas and Mobiloil. B. L. Brown sold meats and groceries plus patent medicines. E. D. Ricker & Son operated the I. G. A. Store and sold general merchandise. Chase's Variety Store advertised as 5c to \$1.00. Groton Grain Company sold Park & Pollard feeds and coal. For-All Grain Company sold feed for all and milk grains. M. E. Beckley sold Crosley refrigerators and radios. Charles C. Lord did job printing. Leslie G. Page was a roofer, chimney sweep, wood sawer and plumber. Elmer C. Frost was a contractor and builder. Henry A. Goodine was a barber. Ray Burgin sold all kinds of insurance. Hosmer Brothers sold cemetery memorials and did lettering and cleaning. Wilbur R. Carbee had a granite and marble works. L. S. Puffer sold chicks of quality, S. C. Rhode Island Reds, Barred Plymouth Rock, and the red rock (cross). Morse Poultry Farm sold chicks and pullets. Achilles' Garage with N. E. Achilles, prop. sold Tydol gasoline, Veedol lubrication, Exide batteries, and provided AAA and ALA service. Carpenters Service Station sold Shell products, Goodyear tires, and Globe batteries. The Square Front Garage operated by W. L. Cassidy sold H. O. Sinclair gasoline, Willard batteries, Miller tires, and Arvin heaters. David Buttrick Co. with Wm. Donald, manager, sold sweet cream and butter. Rupert Ricker did general trucking as did Bert Bailey. H. M. Ricker & Sons sold lumber, wood and sawdust. Shadewell Farm Jerseys was owned by H. B. and G. H. Ricker. Farm Machine Exchange was the dealer for McCormick-Deering farm machinery. Other Groton advertisers were French's Vermont Blue Ribbon Turkeys, and Olson's Approved Lunch Room.



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



SOME GROTON SCENES IN THE THIRTIES

1930 - 1939



Children's parade



Plummer School closed 1932



Roads were plowed



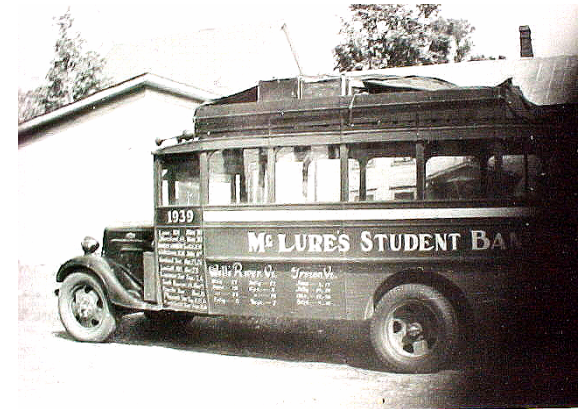
Fair parade



Groton Community Fair



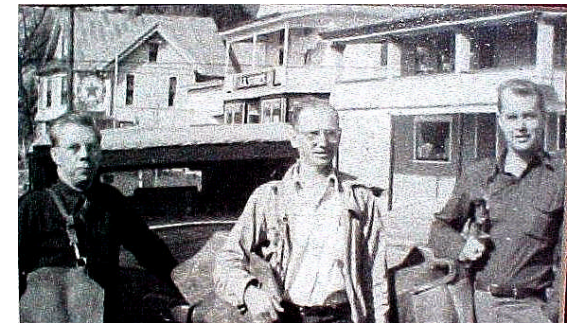
McLure's Student Marching Band at New York World's Fair



McLure's Student Band traveled by bus



Band students getting ready to travel



James Benzie, Roy Hanchett, & Walter Main