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# GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY Newsletter

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Volume 31 Issue 2

Groton, Vermont 05046

Spring 2018

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## GROTON 100 YEARS AGO



Groton Turning Works 1919

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Groton 100 years ago .....	1
Family Connections .....	4
Growing up in Groton .....	6
Groton Families .....	8
Town Meetings ..	10
In Memoriam .....	12
Growing up on Bible Hill ..	13
GHS News .....	14

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Late in the nineteenth and early in the twentieth century Groton population exceeded 1,000 people. It was a railroad town with four to six trains a day transporting mail, freight and passengers. They brought grain for the feed stores, coal and produce for the merchants, and shipped out lumber, granite products and other merchandise. Plus transporting people to and from Montpelier or Wells River or any of the stops in between, or making connections with other railroads to the outside world.

Charles Lord, publisher of the Groton Times, printed a special edition in 1901 with many stories about Groton and Ryegate. He stated, "The three great pillars on which the prosperity of Groton village rests are the granite

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industry, the lumber business, and local trade. Groton is the shipping point for half a dozen sawmills, each of which handles half a million feet or more per annum. It is also the distributing point for the supplies of those mills; and the trade of the gristmill and the general stores is exceptionally heavy.

There are three large general stores, a hotel, two boarding houses, a meat market, hardware store, two harness shops, drug store, jeweler, two barbers, two painters, three skilled blacksmiths, two firms of drovers, one local sawmill, one gristmill, one carriage repair shop, one milliner, one photographer, one undertaker, and three granite sheds where five firms operate. Groton depot is the largest shipping point between Montpelier and Wells River. For years it has been the great trade center of a considerable farming population outside the town limits, and an extensive distributing point for lumbering operations. Last year no less than one hundred men were employed at good wages in the granite sheds.”

Raymond Page listed 66 dairy farms in Groton with 5 or more cows when he was picking up milk at the farms in the early 1920's. *(The list of these farms was in the Summer 2001 Newsletter 14-3)*. Farming had remained the principal occupation in Groton since its settlement and the tilled acreage in the early 1900's was nearly the same as 50 years earlier. Hardly a farmer specialized in any other line except dairying. Butter made at home, until the creamery opened in 1905, was the chief product and source of income . Hens could be found on every farm, the larger producers sending a weekly shipment of eggs to Boston and considerable dressed poultry every fall. Most farmers hung from two hundred to two thousand sap buckets early in March, selling the maple sugar for cash or bartering it at the local store.

The railroad established in 1873 had revived the lumbering business and manufacturing of wood products early in the new century. About 1910 the company of Miller & Ayer built a new mill and boarding house on the site of the former Baldwin & Hazen mill at Groton Pond. Rob Miller bought out V. E. Ayer in 1915 and continued the operation for another ten years. The logs were manufactured into various types of lumber and shipped by rail. Other timber businesses at the time included the charcoal business of Thomas Hall, where the present town garage is located, and the bobbin mill of Hall & McCrillis below the iron bridge on the west end of the village which operated successfully until destroyed by fire in 1909. A few decades later John French converted Rock Maple Ballroom into a bobbin mill, located where Northeast Log Homes is now. The Groton Novelty Works on Mill Street produced pipe stems, file handles and a number of specialty wood products until it closed around 1926, and shortly afterwards the building and the gristmill next door burned on 3 July 1926.

The granite industry more than any other was responsible for the population increase in Groton. With three stone sheds along the railroad tracks, each with derricks for moving the granite blocks and loading the finished products, having five separate firms with one hundred or more employees, there was a housing shortage. The Cliff House, the Hatch Block, the boarding house on Pine Street, the Weed Hotel and the Groton Hotel were full. Several families took in boarders many of which worked in the stone sheds. The 1910 census listed 51 boarders living with families in Groton.

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## Groton Family Connections

The Groton Historical Society (GHS) maintains a record of Groton families collected over the years by Groton historians, Albert Harleigh Hill (1817-1897), Hosea Newell Welch (1860-1941), Waldo Fred Glover (1879-1976), and many members of GHS. The records have been transcribed and entered into genealogy computer programs to facilitate organizing the Groton family connections. Ancestors of people living (and have lived) in Groton came from many different parts of the world and their descendants and relatives have spread to many parts of the world. The GHS family records were collected from family members, town records, newspapers, and more recently from social media where people with Groton connections have posted pictures and information about family members. GHS has a page on Facebook, and Terry Reilly created a group “I Grew UP in Groton Vermont” where people can share stories.

Many people with Groton connections have several ancestors that were early settlers in town. How many of your ancestors lived in Groton or had Groton connections? My wife, Celia Darling (1934-1995) is a descendant of Robards Darling (1765-1840) her 3rd Great Grandfather and John Darling (1744-1830) her 4th Great Grandfather, who were both listed on the first U. S. census of Groton in 1790. Four of the other six family heads listed in 1790 were her cousins. James Abbott (1750-1814) was a 3rd cousin 6 times removed; Israel Bailey (1765-1830) and Edmund Morse (1764-1843) were 4th cousins 5 times removed; and Jonathan James (1755-?) was a 5th cousin 5 times removed. The other two listed in the 1790 census of Groton were not related to Celia, but they both married 4th Great Aunts of hers—Aaron Hosmer Jr. (1769-1831) married Dorothy Darling (1780-1821), and Timothy Townshend (?) married Sally Darling (1770-1825), both daughters of John Darling and sisters of Robards Darling. The message on the welcome signs to Groton that reads “where a small town is like a large family” couldn’t be more true.

Heads of six new families listed in the 1800 census of Groton are also related to Celia, Charles Emery and his son Timothy are her 4th and 3rd Great Grandfathers respectively. Charles other son, John, is Celia's 4th Great Uncle. Nathaniel Knight is her 3rd cousin 5 times removed, Edward Pollard is her 4th cousin 5 times removed and Enoch Manchester is her 6th cousin 4 times removed. There are many other connections with families that came to Groton later. Her third great ancestors family names are Darling, Gile, Brock, Abbott, Shaw, Orr, McPhee, Buchanan, Holmes, Laird, Whitehill, Mitchell, Emery, Wilson, Thompson, Ingraham, Bliss, Kent, Stemme, Hiller, Leney, White, Culver, Lamb, Child, Currier, French, Fogg, and Veasey. Another generation back could increase the number of family names up to possibly doubling them.

Do you know how many connections you have with Groton families? If you have submitted your family history to GHS you can request a pedigree chart with 5 generations to see your family records at GHS. Perhaps you will be able to add more ancestors or correct any errors that you find. If your records are not at GHS you can submit them by email to [grotonvthistory@gmail.com](mailto:grotonvthistory@gmail.com) or by postal service to:

Groton Historical Society  
P. O. Box 89  
Groton, VT 05046.

Be sure to include names, dates and places of birth, marriage and death for each person, their parents, spouse, and children. Pictures and biographical sketches of individuals can be added to the GHS family records and will be greatly appreciated.

Groton Family Records is an ongoing project at GHS and all the help you can provide to keep the records up to date and accurate will be welcomed.

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## GROWING UP IN GROTON

*The following were written by Andrew Jackson "Jack" Carpenter (1915-1992) who grew up in Groton. He was the son of Warren and Cora (Benzie) Carpenter and a great Grandson of Eliphalet and Hannah (Glover) Carpenter.. Jack's family lost contact with him during World War II, but a friend contacted the Groton Town Clerk's Office around 1991, because of his writings about Groton, to let his family know he was dying in Arizona.*

### I Remember Vermont

I wonder if the Vermont Hills are as green as they used to be?  
Do old stone fences follow the hills as far as you can see?  
Does old Blue Mountain still look blue?  
How can a green mountain change its hue?  
And does the old Stone Face still seem to frown,  
when the chill of winter hits his brow?  
Is Groton Pond still a wilderness wild?  
Does Indian Joe still haunt the point?  
Is pumpkin for pie still cooked all day?  
And Boston baked beans served every Saturday?  
Is the Capitol Dome still covered with Gold?  
Do the wild deer and foxes still have a home?  
Are the red barns and white houses still so neat?  
And a kitchen is a big room where you eat?  
Does Ethan Allen still bask in fame?  
And the sleeping sentinel do they remember his name?  
Once I knew Vermont so well  
Then I wandered to other Hills.  
Someday I'll return and I hope I find,  
Some of the spots so dear to my mind.  
For I remember Vermont,  
Even though I let her forget me.

## A Little White Marble Lamb

Jesus often referred to himself as the shepherd and we are his sheep. If you were ever on a farm and had the pleasure of holding a baby lamb or watching it play, it is a joy to behold.

Back in the 20's when I was just a kid, I lived in a little village on the banks of the Wells river. It was clear, cool water full of trout and perch, a good place to swim called Big Rock and in the winter a good place to skate. Groton, Vermont where I was born.

There I heard my first radio, an Atwater Kent with a huge horn speaker. Then I only knew that God made only two kinds of people, Methodists and Baptists. Only Baptists would go to heaven because the Methodists didn't baptize just sprinkled. My school teacher was horrified to learn I had read a book called "Sweden, The Middle Way" and any boy caught looking at the woman's bloomer section of the Sears Roebuck catalogue was in for a good lashing.

It was a beautiful small village built on the side of a mountain and we kids could climb mountains, go fishing or ride our horses almost anywhere. The no trespassing era had not arrived.

In the summer, after church, we often went to the cemetery to put flowers on the family graves and just look at beautiful monuments. My grandfather, a Scotsman named John Benzie owned a granite quarry and a stone cutting plant where his Italian stone cutters using his blue prints carved full size angels with huge wings, gravestones with pictures of the deceased imbedded in the stone and soldiers, full size ordered for town squares to honor soldiers dead by war.

I was just a kid and the one I liked best was a little white lamb lying quietly on a stone base where somebody in love and in tears had buried a child.

Years later it was one of my finest memories. Surely when the good shepherd returns he will send a special angel to get the child that little lamb has tenderly watched over all these years. I wrote this and I hope you like it.

## GROTON FAMILIES



### **Daniel and Caroline (Whitehill) Darling family about 1907**

Seated L to R: Daniel (1846-1911); Caroline (1851-1913) holding Edith Mae (Darling) Beede (1907-1988); Lilla (Darling) Graham (1875-1933) holding Mary (Graham) Beck (1904-1941); Murdo Graham (1886-1912) holding Kenneth Graham (1906-1976).

Standing L to R: Marshall Darling (1887-1951); Charlotte (Keniston) Frost Darling (1881-1938); Malcolm Graham (1897-1962); Peter Darling (1882-1955); Maggie (Graham) McQueen (1899-1987); Norman Graham (1893-1945).

Daniel is a descendant of John Darling (1744-1830) who came to Groton in 1789 and Caroline is a descendant of Jonathan Welch (1761-1828) who came to Groton before 1800, first of their families to live in Groton.





### **Lewis and Florence (Emery) Lund family about 1915**

Seated: L to R: Florence (1876-1954), Lewis (1874-1935)  
Standing L to R: Alma (Lund) Somers(1898-1925) and Alice (Lund) Peck (1901-1975)  
Front L to R: Jennie (Lund) Hunt (1913-2001) and Florence (Lund) Darling (1909-1988)

Lewis is a descendant of Silas Lund (1762-1840) who came to Groton in 1791 and Florence is a descendant of Charles Emery (1745-1843) who came to Groton before 1800, first of their families to live in Groton.

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## VERMONT TOWN MEETING

From a citizen's guide by VT Secretary of State Office  
2008

On Town Meeting Day, the first Tuesday in March, citizens across Vermont come together in their communities to discuss the business of their towns. For over 200 years, Town Meeting Day has been an important political event as Vermonters elect local officers and vote on budgets. It has also been a time for neighbors to discuss the civic issues of their community, state and nation.

The first town meeting in America was in Massachusetts in 1633, but the practice of direct democracy dates back to around 400 B.C. in Athens of ancient Greece. Unlike town meetings today, in ancient Greece women, children and slaves could not vote, and meetings required the presence of at least 6,000 citizens!

Vermont town meeting is a tradition dating back to before there was a Vermont. The first town meeting was held in Bennington in 1762, 15 years before Vermont was created. In the late 1700s, as today, town citizens in Vermont held meetings so that they could address the problems and issues they faced collectively. Popular matters of legislation in earlier town meetings included whether or not to let pigs run free or whether smallpox vaccinations should be allowed in the town (some thought vaccinations were dangerous). Voters also decided what goods or labor could be used as payment for taxes. Town meeting also served a social function (as it does today), bringing people together who might not otherwise know each other. This can strengthen social ties within a town and help people work together to tackle community problems.

Vermont town meetings (except for Brattleboro where a system of representative democracy is used) are the practice of direct democracy. That is, eligible citizens of the town may vote on specific issues that are announced through a warning. The town meeting warning tells when and where town meeting will be held, and it lists all of the articles (topics) that are going to be discussed and voted on at the meeting. The warning must be publicized at least 30 days before the meeting.

Towns can vote in two different ways at March Town Meeting – by floor vote or by Australian ballot. Most towns use a

combination of both voting methods. The floor vote is what we generally picture a Vermont Town Meeting to be like – it is when people gather together at a public meeting place like the town hall or local school to discuss and vote on issues. Floor meetings can last a few hours – or they can go all day. The length of the meeting depends on how many articles are on the warning and how much discussion there is over the issues raised by the articles.

Australian ballot voting takes only a few minutes. It takes place at a polling place where voters mark a secret ballot which is counted when the polls close. This is also how we cast our ballots at the general election in November. Town Boards of Civil Authority (BCA) determine when the polls open in the morning (between 5:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.). All polls must close at 7:00 p.m. Most towns use a combination of Australian ballot voting and a floor meeting vote. In 2008, 15 towns conducted all of the town business using Australian ballot voting only, 61 decided all of their business by floor vote, and 170 towns used a combination of both.

At a floor meeting there are no representatives (except in Brattleboro, which uses a system of representative democracy as mentioned earlier). Citizens speak directly for themselves, seeking to clarify or amend items to be voted, or to persuade those present on whether or not to vote for a particular measure.

Over the past 200 years little has changed about what actually happens at town meeting. The meeting begins with each town electing a moderator who runs the town meeting. The town clerk keeps minutes of the discussion and records the votes. Every town begins its meetings in its own way. After the moderator calls the meeting to order (by banging the gavel and asking everyone to quiet down so the meeting can start), many towns begin with the Pledge of Allegiance. Some introduce the select board or school board, some thank the volunteers who are providing food or displays at the meeting, some welcome and recognize the oldest or newest members of the community, and some simply get down to the business of the day.

The moderator begins the work of the meeting by announcing the first article listed in the warning. After an article is voted on, the moderator announces the next article listed in the

*(Continued on page 12)*

warning. Unless the voters decide to pass over an article or rearrange the order of the articles, the meeting will address each article in turn, from the first to the last, until they are all addressed. Vermont law requires that the moderator use a very formal procedure to run the meeting called Robert's Rules of Order.

Robert's Rules of Order sets specific rules for the meeting to help the moderator keep order and ensure that the meeting is fair. These rules are published in a small book that can be referred to during the meeting if necessary.

Vermont law makes town meeting a holiday for employees of the state government. The law also gives an employee the right to take unpaid leave from work to attend his or her annual town meeting, subject to the essential operation of the business or government. An employee must give the employer at least seven days notice if he or she wants to take advantage of this right to attend town meeting. Students who are over 18 also have the right to attend town meeting (unless the student is in state custody at a secure facility). These students may not be treated as truants for missing school to attend town meeting.

Only legal voters may participate in town meeting. This means that non-voters (people who live in other towns, young people, or people who live in town but who are not registered to vote) do not have a right to speak at town meeting. Of course, they may never vote at town meeting. The meeting may vote to allow a non-voter to speak at town meeting. To do this, the voters must pass a motion to allow the individual to address the assembly. This motion must pass by a two-thirds majority vote.

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## **IN MEMORIAM**

Of three GHS members who passed away in 2017

Florence Betty Dudley—28 Feb 2017, age 100

June Jorgensen—12 Sep 2017, age 85

Durwood French—25 Oct 2017, age 84

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## GROWING UP ON BIBLE HILL

Carol (Welch) Shields

We spent a childhood growing up on Bible Hill in Ryegate, roaming our 120 acre playground, feeling so blessed to live here. To have beautiful views in every direction, mountains on three sides and down over the hill the blue waters of Ticklenaked pond. Our grey aged drafty old farmhouse with the attached piazza, tool room and woodshed and unfinished second and third stories upstairs brimming with antiques left by the Whites, busied us children for years.

Open fields, often un-hayed, prolific with wildflowers, and acres and acres of woods with logging trails that we knew like the back of our hands. An old sugarhouse with vestiges of buckets, spouts, a crumbling brick arch topped by a well rusted boiling pan.

No need to buy fruit, apples aplenty in that orchard, wild strawberries on every hillside, raspberries and blackberries, plenty to eat fresh and lots for Mom to can. A long arbor of Concord, the rhubarb patch and even a bustling elderberry bush. Dad's huge vegetable gardens weeded and harvested with happy "child labor" kept our table well supplied and Mom with her face to the fire all summer canning on the old Glenwood cook stove.

No fear of "the wolf on the doorstep" come winter — the potato bin down in the stoned up basement overflowing with Green Mountains, well banked by pumpkins and squash and flanked by a well stocked jelly cupboard with every variety of sweetness sealed in paraffin. Some years the large crocks filled to the brim with salt pork from spring piglets grown fat on daily rations of cornmeal and vegetable scraps.

No electricity, no plumbing, no furnace, no insulation in those walls in the early years, those one piece union suits kept us toasty all winter and doubled for p.j.'s !!..... Rich?, Yes!! Oh. how rich we were!!

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## GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Visit GHS on the internet

Email: [grotonvthistory@gmail.com](mailto:grotonvthistory@gmail.com)

Web page: [grotonvthistory.org](http://grotonvthistory.org)

Facebook@[grotonvthistory](https://www.facebook.com/grotonvthistory)

### APPRECIATING GHS VOLUNTEERS

President Deborah Jurist

About 20 volunteers attended an appreciation brunch at My Farmers Market Restaurant in Groton on Saturday March 10. There were lots of folks who have done work on the Peter Paul House. Prentis Pratt, who prunes the cedars came with his wife Patty as his "plus one". Frank Lapham, who has been turning our water on and off for years, also attended. Dick and Martha Montague joined us, and Dick expressed interest in labeling and identifying some of the old tools in the shed. Perhaps, some folks reading the newsletter have a recollection of the tools there.

Phyllis Burke, Patty Pratt and Robin Edwards all expressed interest in the fabulous collection of clothing stored in the PPH. Perhaps this will be the year we can begin to do some preservation work on the clothing. A date was set for Janet Puffer to lead us in making her famous caramels on Saturday April 7th. Phil Coutu is working on another surprise treat for the April Open House..

There was consensus on making the Montpelier to Wells River Railroad a theme for 2018. Perhaps the theme of the RR could be a guide for the newsletter in the coming months. Memories of the train are of great interest to all. Phil Coutu suggested keeping the theme of the Railroad for a Labor Day event, possibly inviting Dan Lindner back to play music on Labor Day weekend. With Deane and Bing Page's help we identified a few people in the area who are Railroad buffs and might be willing to do a presentation.

Erik Volk, is working with Deborah Jurist on the next book we are going to publish, *Mr. Glover's Childhood*. The text

is ready but the format and cover need to be set up with images.

Reginald Welch, our local genealogy expert joined us and had a lovely chat with Jim Burke about their time in the armed services, as well as Joan Haskell, past treasurer, and Tom and Janet Page. Janet made donuts for our April event last year, while Tom helped his parents, Deane and Bing Page, with the sugar on snow.

Many thanks go out to Jason, from Mountain Man Pizza, and Jen for the delicious brunch food, which was made from many local ingredients, including bread from Cross Molina Farms, and eggs from the Rusted Feather Farm. The My Farmers Market is an exciting addition to the Groton food scene



Sixteen of the 20 GHS volunteers enjoying the appreciation brunch March 10



Groton Railroad Station about 1919 by Capt. D. A. Smith

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