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# GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

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Volume 35 Issue 2

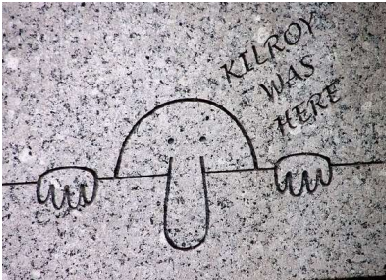
Groton, Vermont 05046

Spring 2022

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# KILROY WAS HERE

(Submitted by Allen Goodine)



“KILROY WAS HERE”

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He is engraved in stone in the National War Memorial in Washington, DC - back in a small alcove where very few people have seen it. For the WWII generation, this will bring back memories. For younger folks, it's a bit of trivia that is part of American history. Anyone born between 1913 and 1950, is familiar with Kilroy. No one knew why he was so well known - but everybody seemed to get into it.

So who was Kilroy?

In 1946 the American Transit Association, through its radio program, "Speak to America," sponsored a nationwide contest to find the real Kilroy, offering a prize of a real trolley car to the person who could prove himself to be the genuine article. Almost 40 men stepped forward to make that claim, but only James Kilroy from Halifax, Massachusetts, had evidence of his identity.

'Kilroy' was a 46-year-old shipyard worker during the war who

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worked as a checker at the Fore River Shipyard in Quincy. His job was to check on the number of rivets completed. Riveters were on piecework and got paid by the rivet. He would count a block of rivets and put a check mark in semi-waxed lumber chalk, so the rivets wouldn't be counted twice. When Kilroy went off duty, the riveters would erase the mark. Later, an off-shift inspector would come through and count the rivets a second time, resulting in double pay for the riveters.

One day Kilroy's boss called him into his office. The foreman was upset about all the wages being paid to riveters and asked him to investigate. It was then he realized what had been going on. The tight spaces he had to crawl in to check the rivets didn't lend themselves to lugging around a paint can and brush, so Kilroy decided to stick with the waxy chalk. He continued to put his check mark on each job he inspected but added 'KILROY WAS HERE' in king-sized letters next to the check, and eventually added the sketch of the chap with the long nose peering over the fence and that became part of the Kilroy message.

Once he did that, the riveters stopped trying to wipe away his marks. Ordinarily the rivets and chalk marks would have been covered up with paint. With the war on, however, ships were leaving the Quincy Yard so fast that there wasn't time to paint them. As a result, Kilroy's inspection "trademark" was seen by thousands of servicemen who boarded the troopships produced in the shipyard.

His message apparently rang a bell with the servicemen, because they picked it up and spread it all over Europe and the South Pacific.

Before war's end, "Kilroy" had been here, there, and everywhere on the long hauls to Berlin and Tokyo. To the troops outbound in those ships, however, he was a complete mystery; all they knew was that someone named Kilroy had "been there first." As a joke, U.S. servicemen began placing the graffiti wherever they landed, claiming it was already there when they arrived.

Kilroy became the U.S. super-GI who had always "already been" wherever GIs went. It became a challenge to place the logo

in the most unlikely places imaginable (it is said to be atop Mt. Everest, the Statue of Liberty, the underside of the Arc de Triumphant, and even scrawled in the dust on the moon.)

As the war went on, the legend grew. Underwater demolition teams routinely sneaked ashore on Japanese-held islands in the Pacific to map the terrain for coming invasions by U.S. troops (and thus, presumably, were the first GI's there). On one occasion, however, they reported seeing enemy troops painting over the Kilroy logo!

In 1945, an outhouse was built for the exclusive use of Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill at the Potsdam conference. Its' first occupant was Stalin, who emerged and asked his aide (in Russian), "Who is Kilroy?"

To help prove his authenticity in 1946, James Kilroy brought along officials from the shipyard and some of the riveters. He won the trolley car, which he gave to his nine children as a Christmas gift and set it up as a playhouse in the Kilroy yard in Halifax, Massachusetts

And The Tradition Continues...EVEN Outside Osama Bin Laden's House!!!



## **Bristol Bill and His Counterfeit Gang**

by

Andrew John "Johnny" White (1898-1965)

### **Synopsis**

In the winter of 1848 and 1849 chrome dyes for engraving were stolen from the office of Mr. W. W. Wilson in Boston, Mass. One of his employee's missing about that time was a man named Christian Meadows. He came into Wells River Bank one day and was recognized by Mr. Oscar Hale, cashier of the bank. Later he was seen in company with another man who registered at a hotel as W. H. Warburton . He was an Englishman, generally known as Bristol Bill, a burglar and bank robber, nicknamed from his bank robbery at Bristol, Rhode Island. Some say it was because he came from Bristol, England.

Colonel Jacob Kent, County sheriff, with a party of men came on March 5, 1849 to the Clough place in West Groton and arrested Bristol Bill and a woman named Margaret O'Connell (some say it was O'Connor) who along with Christian Meadows and his wife were in the gang.

At the premises they found a complete set of burglar's tools, and elsewhere a transfer plate, weighing about 1,500 pounds, a copper plate, a printing press, several blank copper plates, and 135 dyes from different banks. They tell me an underground tunnel was found from Carroll Ricker's funeral home under the road to where Burt Brown's store was built later (now a BBQ Restaurant). Nellie "Pudie" White's great grandfather on her grandmother White's side, Andrew Jackson "Jack" Carpenter, a Groton Road Commissioner found the tunnel. The dyes stolen from Mr. W. W. Wilson were found under a bee hive of Ephraim Lowe's behind Brown's Store.

Ephraim Lowe, McLane Marshall, and Peter M. Paul were also arrested. McLane Marshall built the Lake House at Ricker's Pond, later run by Leverett Page, grandfather of Mrs. John Hatch and Mrs. Harold S. Eastman Sr. Then as I remember, the Lake House was owned by a St. Johnsbury lawyer, Alexander Dunnett as a summer home. After Mr. Dunnett's death his stepdaughter, Mrs. Grace Lowe owned it and now in 1961 Joseph [ended].

McLane Marshall also built a boat called “Lady of the Lake” to carry about 35 people. He died 1907 in California and is buried in Groton.

Peter M. Paul had a jewelry store in the west end of Wesson Jones’ house (now Groton Historical Society). I remember Carlyle Heath had a paint shop in the east end of Wesson Jones garage and at one time Henry Goodine used it for his barbershop. I think Peter M. Paul was a grandfather of Mrs. Ellsworth Darling, Mrs. Nellie Hadlock, and Carlyle Heath. Peter M. Paul and McLane Marshall turned state’s evidence, and Ephraim Lowe died in the Danville Jail. Danville was the County Seat then where County Court was held instead of St. Johnsbury. During Bristol Bill’s trial in June 1849 session of Court at Danville, he stabbed the States Attorney Bliss M. Davis in his neck with a knife, but it was not fatal. Afterwards he was pardoned from Windsor State Prison and employed by the engraving department at Washington, D. C. Some people say he was arrested at the old Clough place in West Groton with Margaret O’Connor or O’Connell, and Christian Meadow. Others say he was arrested in the woods around Groton Pond above the present Stillwater Crossing.

### **The Story of Bristol Bill and his counterfeit gang**

Considerable imagination is required to picture the quiet little village of Groton as it is on Wednesday, Jan. 6, 1961, as having been the locale of a gang of counterfeiters and bank robbers: but such was the case in the winter of 1848-49. This story of the gang and its notorious leader comes from various sources, partly from people living in town in 1930 whose parents personally knew the chief characters involved, details of operators from county records, histories of other towns, and newspaper clippings.

The story of William Darlington alias William H. Warburton is a Diamond Dick novel to a generation of long ago. And for its beginning we must cross the Atlantic to Bristol., England where he was born about 1802 This may be the reason he was called Bristol Bill, but I have found another possible reason, Bill was involved in a bank robbery in Bristol, Rhode Island according to Newbury town history.

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It is said on good authority his parents were an old respected family, his father was a member of British Parliament at one time. Although William was rather headstrong, a dare devil of a boy who preferred games to study, he was fitted for college and became a student of Eton College. With money to spend, he frequently slipped away to London to see the sights of the great city, but nothing suspicious or criminal was apparent in these escapades, and he continued his college course until he violently fell in love with a poor, but beautiful girl named Mary Livingston. But his father had great ambitions for his son, and in his hurry, demanded he either give up the penniless girl or leave his house. The boy chose the latter course and with his sweetheart boarded a coach for London.

With little money, they lived in very humble quarters, and William began searching for employment, but with little success. He finally found work in a lock smith shop where he showed unusual mechanical ability and was soon employed on the most difficult pieces of mechanisms. This ability later led to his down fall. All went well for a time, until one morning his employer told him sudden loses made it necessary to close shop and discontinue business. It later developed that the proprietor of the shop was a member of a gang of bank robbers and used his place to make the instruments needed for their work while appearing to do legitimate business. Learning the police were becoming suspicious, it seemed wiser to close the business than take the chance of arrest, and as a result William Darlington was again without work.

Then followed a long period of unemployment during which the family, now numbering three, suffered extreme poverty. One day William, desperate with anxiety and ready for anything that would provide relief for his family to which he seemed devoted, he met Mr. Burns, his former employer and told him of his troubles. With great friendliness and solicitude, Mr. Burns showed him a way out of his difficulties. A man skilled in making duplicate keys and the manipulation of locks was needed by a group known as the "Blue Boys" who were planning on robbing a great warehouse. William did not lack enthusiasm when it was suggested he could join the Blue Boys and share in their Booty. He was told much of the money taken from the rich was given to the poor, and it was his duty to provide comfort for Mary and his child. Apparently, it was

more dire necessity than any criminal instinct or desire the young man entered upon his spectacular career.

It was at this time he was known to the London police and the underworld of the great city as Bristol Bill. However, the history of Newbury states he was named Bristol Bill after Bristol, Rhode Island, because of his bank robberies there. The London detectives were on his case. The unsuspecting Mary, believing her husband had found a good job in a distant part of the city which provided ample funds for her convenience, never knew the notorious Bristol Bill name in the headlines of the London Newspapers in connection with the most daring robberies of the city, was none other than her devoted William. He was forced to flee the country and his strange disappearance remained a mystery to his wife Mary.

Bristol Bill came to America, where he felt safe from recognition and arrest. Years of hiding from the officers of the law, long months in prison following apprehension, and growing bitterness against the social system, forced him to become an outcast. When he landed in New Bedford, MA, having worked his passage on a whaling vessel, he had developed into a ruthless and extremely clever criminal ready to resume his career of robbery at the earliest opportunity.

Making his way to Providence, Rhode Island, he met a former London associate who also had been compelled to leave his native land and who introduced him to men of like character. After disposal of booty he obtained, he went to Boston and registered at the Fremont House, a first-class hotel, as William Warburton. From his room he could look down on a large jewelry store at the corner of Beacon Street and he familiarized himself with the store and its stock. Meanwhile acquiring the needed tools, he crept stealthy to the store, forced its lock, and entered. A few minutes later he returned to the hotel carrying a large amount of valuable jewelry. The next day, great excitement prevailed over the daring robbery, but after a few days it died down, only to be revived by a second break in of like importance. No clues were found by police and no suspicions were attached to the well-dressed gentleman appearing at the Fremont House.

(To be continued in next Newsletter)



## MAPLE SUGARING PICTURES

From Allen Goodine



Gathering sap with yoke and buckets



Display of a yoke to carry sap buckets at Troy's Sugarhouse. He also has a wooden sap bucket made about 1870 in East Calais by William Peck and used in the 1940's by James Benzie in Groton, VT



Troy Oliver with stainless steel evaporator inside his sugarhouse.





Matt Puffer's Sugarhouse on Whitcher Mountain, Groton, Vermont



Inside Matt Puffer's sugarhouse showing his stainless steel evaporator.

## SUGARING—THEN & NOW

By Allen Goodine

I recently reviewed Mr. Glover's Groton, 1875 Beers Atlas map of Groton, and 1901 Groton Times issue of Groton citizens. I noticed sugar groves on the map and another one described in the 1901 Groton Times.

Sugar groves on the map were owned by Ricker, Scott, Thurston, and Taisey. The Vance family is noted in the 1901 Groton Times. These families are familiar to those living in Groton in the 40s/50s/and 60s.

Early, maple sugaring in March and April was very important on every farm. It was essential as a sweetener for family use and for barter at the local store. Only equipment needed was an iron kettle, ax, tapping iron, two wooden pails and a sap yoke. Mr. Glovers Groton describes early sugaring on pages 58-60.

In the twentieth-century maple syrup was the predominant farm product. Vermont made 160,000 gallons in 1900. The 1906 federal Pure Food and Drug Act prohibited adding glucose to maple syrup, further bolstering the industry. In 1920 Vermont produced 3.5 million gallons of syrup, a popular table delicacy. The tools and machinery Vermonters invented for sugaring became another profitable industry. Vermont today still leads the U. S. in maple syrup production, and many depend on the money earned from this spring harvest.

Early in the 19th century, sap was gathered by individuals with a yoke on their shoulders carrying buckets to wooden holding tanks. Later oxen towed a sled with a metal holding tank. And in the 1970s sap was still gathered by the same methods, but using horses, tractors, and small tracked vehicles.

We will focus "then and now" on two of Groton sugaring areas: Vance family and William Taisey homestead.

Morris Vance (1837-1906) was son of a Revolutionary War soldier, who settled in Groton in the early 1800s. Morris, a Civil War Soldier (Wells River Co., 3rd VT Reg), returned to Groton and bought a farm in Westville (West Groton). Later he swapped it for the hill farm at the end of Heath Brook Road, now owned by the Ruggles family. One of a "few" residences at the very west end of town. The 1901 Groton Times stated this is a good 200 acre hill farm. Morris resided here until 1895 when his sons, Grant and Oscar took over the farm. It's one of the finest second growth sugar places in the country, with 3000 trees and 1200 are set up with tin buckets. The Vance brothers were among the prosperous and progressive famers in Town.

The Taisey family, one of the oldest, was a large family in Town at one time. Robert (1767-1844), forebearer of Groton Taiseys, came from

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Scotland in the early 1800s. A son, John (1791-1872), bought 40 acres of land, added more and now has 300. He made bricks used in building his home, the only brick house in Groton.

His house is on current route 302 near Witherspoon road. The 1875 Beers Map shows W Taisey (1816-1895) at the brick house and a sugarbush located on the southwest side of Whitcher Mountain where Ryegate, Newbury, Topsham and Groton meet. We don't know if a sugarhouse was located there or if they used the one near their brick home (still there today). Four generations of the Taisey family lived and labored on this fine old homestead.

Today's sugaring at these two sites uses current technology; sap gathering with plastic tubing from each tree and sap flowing to a tank at the sugarhouse or nearby area, using a vacuum pump to increase sap collection. These operations use between 2 and 5 miles of tubing.

The original Taisey Sugar Grove is now owned by Matt Puffer, Groton resident, owner of Puffer Excavating business. He owns much of the west and east side of Whitcher Mountain. Matt started sugaring about 10 years ago as a project with his sons, Mark and Jon, utilizing a small sugarhouse they built. They have tapped about 2000 trees.

In 2017, Matt built a sugarhouse 24x36 ft equipped with a 4x14 ft modern stainless steel arch and evaporator. Heat is provided by fuel oil, producing up to 20 gallons of syrup per hour. Reverse Osmosis (RO) is used to refine the sugar content of the sap. With RO, sugar can increase from 1.5-2% to 8-10% thus a shorter boiling time. Matt produced 500 gallons in 2021 and 300 in 2022.

Troy Oliver, Groton resident, co-owner of Groton Tire and Auto with his bother-in-law, owns property adjacent to Vance family homestead. In 2021 he built a sugarhouse, 24x40 feet. Troy started sugaring with his dad as a child and developed a "passion" for sugaring.

In 2022, Troy tapped 1600 trees and made 700 gallons of syrup. Along with his property, he leases taps, many on the original Vance family sugar grove. Troy's stainless steel system is fired by wood and uses about 8 cords each year. Troy also uses RO and a filter press to remove impurities. His sugaring operation is also a family affair.

Troy's sugarhouse has historical exhibits; (1) an original yoke and bucket for gathering and (2) a wood bucket made in E. Calais-1870s and used by James Benzie of Groton, Matt Puffer's grandfather, and newsletter editor, Willard Benzie's father.

Much of Troy's product is sold retail; pints, quarts and gallons, while Matt's syrup is sold wholesale in 30 gallon stainless steel drums.

Vermont produced 2 million gallons of syrup in 2020. But while the focus is sugaring, this is about land use, then and now.

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## FOREST CHANGES FROM COLONIAL TIMES

from Forestry Source October 2013

A joint Harvard – Smithsonian study released in 2013 showed how much – and how little – Northeastern forests have changed after centuries of intensive land use. A hike through today’s woods will reveal the same types of trees that a colonial settler would have encountered 400 years ago. But the similarities end there. Jonathan Thompson, research associate at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and lead author of the study, explains: “If you only looked at a tree species list, you’d have the impression that Northeast forests haven’t changed. But once you start mapping the trees and counting them, a different picture emerges. In some ways the forest is completely transformed.”

Thompson and his colleagues compared colonial – era tree records to present day U. S. Forest Service data from the nine-state area stretching from Pennsylvania to Maine. Results show stark contrasts between pre-colonial forests and those of today. Maples are far more common across the Northeast: their numbers having increased by more than 20 percent in most towns. Other species have declined sharply. Beeches, oaks, and chestnuts show the most pronounced loss – big trouble, Thompson notes, for wildlife depending on tree nuts for winter survival.

Pine numbers have shifted more than any other tree type, increasing in some places, decreasing elsewhere. Thompson pins this variability to ecology and economy: “Pine is valuable for timber, but quick to return after cutting. It has a social and environmental dynamism to it.”

The nine states in the study share a similar – and notable – forest history: during the 18th and 19th centuries, more than half the forestland was cleared for agriculture and cut for timber. Most farms were eventually abandoned, and forests returned to many of them during the 20th century. Today, about 80 percent of the Northeast is forested. Despite forest clearing, widespread logging, fires, climate change, invasive pests, and disease, the Northeast remains the most heavily forested region of the country. However, today’s forests are more homogenous and less responsive to small changes in temperature and precipitation.

“The overriding theme of this forest region is resilience in the face of multiple impacts.” notes David Foster, co-author of the study and Director of the Harvard Forest in Massachusetts. “This is an important lesson for the future. If we do not replace forests with houses and pavement, they will endure future challenges as well.”

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## GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Phyllis Burke, Secretary

**Minutes of Meeting** Tuesday, April 12, 2022, 3:00 p.m. at Peter Paul House. Present: President Deborah Jurist; Vice President Brent Smith; Secretary Phyllis Burke; Allen Goodine, Cheryl LaTourneau, Rebecca (Becky) Rectenwald, Sarah Spira, Terrence Curran, and Mike Gaiss. Absent: Treasurer Susan Pelkey Smith.

Deborah called the meeting to order at 3:05, and distributed the minutes of Nov. 9, 2021 meeting. Motion by Brent, second by Deborah to approve the minutes. All approved.

Deborah distributed Treasurer's Report for 1/1/22 – 3/31/22; showing net revenue from sale of puzzles, prints and maps; and a summary of memorial and painting project contributions. She noted \$5000.00 was transferred to the CD. Cash balance, including the CD, is \$20,046.88. We are doing well! Deborah asked us to think about Peter Paul House maintenance needs for the next meeting, Motion by Mike, second by Deborah to accept treasurer's report. All approved.

**Officers for 2022.** Deborah, Brent, and Susan have agreed to carry on as president, vice-president, and treasurer. Phyllis would appreciate help with the secretary's job, previously divided with a recording secretary and corresponding secretary. Any ideas? May 24th meeting will be Election of officers. .

**GHS Website.** Sarah has completed most of the website tasks listed in the 11/9/21 minutes, except adding pictures of the clothing, information about the GHS-published books, and the genealogy database. An SSL Certificate has been purchased for a two year period. She has added Google Analytics to the site and offered to index the photos. Deborah asked us all to check the website to see if we're happy with the layout. Sarah asked us to consider the "Historical Resources" category – possibly making separate topics. Allen asked about an index for newsletter articles, which Willard has already provided, but needs updating. Security for website: For \$120 a year Terry Miller, who manages Peacham Historical Society website, will keep the plugins updated and the patches that come

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from Word Fence. She will upload the newsletters and keep the current newsletter structure. Motion by Allen, second by Rebecca to pay Terry Miller \$120 a year for these services. All approved.

**Historic Houses, focus for 2022 season.** Discussion continued from the 11/9/2021 meeting. Deborah reported Debbie Lyford is a title searcher who we might ask to a meeting or a property history program. Mike suggested the program be recorded, perhaps by Kingdom Access. Sarah would like to revisit the walking tour. She will set up a House and Property History heading on the website and prepare a dummy template for historic information. She will also make a list of books at the Groton Library to help with house research.

### NEW BUSINESS

**GHS media on tape.** Deborah found a 1992 VHS tape with Alice Goodine talking about Groton Pond History. A discussion followed of what GHS has on tape that needs to be digitalized. Allen will inventory the VHS tapes. Terrence will explore how they can be digitalized.

**GHS newsletter.** Discussed how we can move forward with the newsletter. Can we help Willard come up with topics? Use topics from old newsletters, as in a “The Best of” series? Mike suggested we ask Willard what he’s able and willing to do going forward. Allen will email him. Deborah suggested we have separate meetings for the newsletter, and for house history.

**Access to Peter Paul House for members.** Deborah acknowledged the need for members to explore the house to familiarize themselves with what’s there. Rebecca and Cheryl would like to do that. Deborah suggested members email her to request a key, and all agreed that’s OK. She gave Rebecca and Cheryl a key at the meeting. Rebecca offered to make a log to record who visits the house, and their area of interest.

**Recording elders.** Mike and Becky brought up the importance of recording our elders’ memories. Perhaps BMU students could do it for extra credit or a community service? Sarah suggested working through the BMU library.

**Donation.** The family of the late Betty Bouley Webster donated her early 20th century telephone, consisting of a wall unit and a separate handset. All approved accepting the donation.

**The next meeting** will be May 24th at 6:00 p.m. at the Peter Paul House. Meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Phyllis Burke, Secretary

## VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

In 2026, the United States commemorates its 250th birthday, and VHS is embracing this momentous anniversary to reflect on our collective history – progress we have made and the challenges we face today.

It also provides opportunity to examine our Vermont history resources and explore ways to improve the quality and quantity of our K-12 history program, increase collaborations between local historical societies and schools, ensure history is inclusive of all students, and inspire study of their communities.

In June, VHS will have a series of workshops with an overview of how to catalog objects and archive materials, with practical advice and hands-on experience. Good, better, and best approaches will be explained, and the workshop is suitable for those with a wide range of familiarity and experience describing things.

The first two modules are virtual presentations, with ample time for questions and discussion. The third and fourth modules will be in-person, hands-on sessions held at the Vermont History Center in Barre, VT.

Workshops will be FREE to Vermont organization members, thanks to support of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency, through the Library Services and Technology Act as administered by the Vermont Department of Libraries.

VHS has a couple of open positions: Stewardship Coordinator full time based in Barre, VT for day-to-day operations and support of members and volunteers to carry out our mission. Starting salary around \$42,000; and Program Assistant part time based in Montpelier, VT to assist and support educational programs and projects, and helps with daily operations of Vermont History Museum. Normally 28 hrs/week. Starting salary approx. \$16.60 hour with limited benefits.

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