

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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Winter 2022



Inside look: Jesse Heath carved this powder horn in 1780, when he fought against the British in the American Revolution. See article on p. 4.

Caledonia?? Groton?

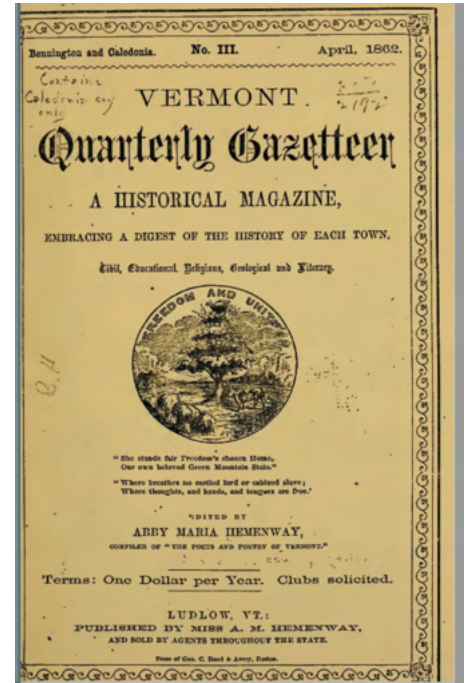
How did they get their names?

ALLEN GOODINE

What's in a name? Vermont joined the Union in 1791, but before the Revolution, that part of the country that would become Vermont was claimed by New York and New Hampshire and was known as "The New Hampshire Grants." Let's look at the origin of Caledonia County and how it was named.

The Rev. Thomas Goodwillie, of Barnet, penned this history, published in the Vermont Quarterly Gazetteer in 1862 and briefly summarized here:

In 1764, King George III decreed a boundary between New Hampshire and New York along the west bank of the Connecticut River, north of Massachusetts. New York's General Assembly designated four counties in the northeastern part of the state, in what is now Vermont. These new counties were Bennington and Charlotte on the west, and Cumberland and Gloucester on the east side of the Green Mountains. Gloucester en-



The April, 1862 issue of the Vermont Quarterly Gazetteer included an article on the history of Caledonia County by a minister from Barnet.

compassed the land that would later become Caledonia County.

Gloucester extended north from Cumberland County, west from the Connecticut River, south from the Canadian border and east from a line roughly following the Green Mountains. (See the 1777 map.)

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2022 OFFICERS

- PresidentDeborah Jurist
- Vice President.....Brent Smith
- SecretaryPhyllis Burke
- Treasurer... Susan Pelkey Smith
- Website
- Editors.....Sarah Spira, Terry Miller
- Newsletter
- Editor..... Louise Reynolds

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Join us for an Open House

Friday, December 16, from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Peter Paul House for a townwide celebration. The Greenwood stove will be going and we are hoping Santa will make an appearance at 5 as we enjoy Linda Nunn's homemade doughnuts. Books, puzzles and maps will be available for purchase!

WINTER Lantern WALK

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16TH
5-7PM

Stroll around Groton Village & enjoy the lights of the SD Ireland Holiday Mixer at the Library!

Meet Santa at the Peter Paul House

Hot Chocolate, Cider
and Snacks!

Ornaments & Crafts

Hosted by
Groton Rec. Committee
Groton Historical Society
Groton Free Public Library
Sarah's Smokehouse
Artisano





Year-end President's Report for 2022

Groton Historical Society's active members grew by leaps and bounds this year. We were joined at meetings by several folks who took on new roles. By Fall Foliage Day they were giving docent tours of the house and helping visitors learn about how to research the history of their Groton properties. We have a new editor for the Newsletter, Louise Reynolds, a retired journalism teacher! The website has been revamped and updated thanks to Sarah Spira and with help from Terry Miller.

Hidden treasures continue to reveal themselves at the PPH. Personal journals and two old chattel record books, a book of town land appraisals from the mid 1800s were discovered and brought into the light so visitors could interact with primary source materials at the August and Fall Foliage events.

Unlike many museums, the PPH encourages visitors to touch, read and discover the house's contents on their own. There are toy areas for kids to investigate and an early 19th century kitchen in the basement. The garage houses old town reports and artifacts from local businesses, mail sorting boxes from the old post offices, agricultural tools and military gear.

The Peter Paul House belongs to the people of Groton.

This year we welcomed new property owners and longtime Groton residents who wanted to learn more about the history of their property. The website now has new pages with links and info about how to do research on your own property as well as stories of some of Groton's special homes.

As we navigate new projects and community outreach, we are looking for ways to have more frequent meetings—not just focused on projects, events, and business—for community members to join.

To that end there will be an Open House on the evening of Friday, December 16, for socializing and sharing stories and doughnuts as we gather around the old Glenwood cookstove.

Warmest Regards,
Deborah Jurist - President

Your house history: *Titles, maps, genealogy*

Interested in learning more about who lived in your home? Wonder when it was built and by whom? The GHS has compiled resources and suggestions for how to get started researching the history of your home.

This article is a brief summary of information that can be found on the Groton Historical Society website, at the following URL: <https://02c0d8.a2cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/house-history-research-guide.pdf>

Check town land records

Land records include any document related to a property that has been recorded and filed for public record. Lots of information can be gleaned from records—such as a legal description of the property and the history of property ownership. The Groton Town Clerk's Office maintains records from approximately 1835 to present.

Records from 1987 to present are available online. Access online records through the town website: www.grotonvt.com. Hover over "Government" and then select "Online Land Records."

Search land records in person

To research land records, make an appointment with the Town Clerk. Please see the full article online for more information.

Look at maps

Early maps of Groton show the land divisions and lot numbers from the earliest surveys. Supporting documents can often link lot numbers to their first private landowners.

Explore more

Research the genealogy of homeowners; read "Mr. Glover's Groton." Discover many more resources and dive deeper into this interesting query when you **visit the GHS website**.

“What’s in a name?” *continued*

In 1777, delegates from 28 towns in the four counties met to declare their independence from the British colonies of New Hampshire, New York and Quebec and to establish the independent state of Vermont. New York formally ceded Cumberland and Gloucester Counties to Vermont; Cumberland County absorbed Gloucester shortly afterward.

Cumberland, however, would have a short history: in 1781, the legislature divided the county into a new configuration: Windham, Windsor and Orange Counties. Newbury became the shire town—or county seat—of Orange County, with boundaries similar to the original Gloucester County: all lands in what would become the northeastern part of the state to the Canadian border—our part of Vermont.

Vermont joined the original thirteen states of the Union in 1791. The following year, Caledonia County was incorporated from Orange, including all that part of Vermont in the north of Orange County, and extending so far west as to include Montpelier and adjacent towns. In 1796, Danville became the shire town.

By 1835, Vermont had established all fourteen counties: Addison, Bennington, Caledonia, Chittenden, Grand Isle, Essex, Franklin, Lamoille, Orange, Orleans, Rutland, Washington, Windham and Windsor. Lamoille County was the last to be established.

For the next hundred years, the boundaries of Caledonia County would grow and shrink as new towns sprung up and new counties took shape. In 1856, the county seat moved from Danville to St. Johnsbury, where new government buildings were erected.

About 1960, Johnnie White, Groton’s go-to historian, insisted that I and my classmates John Morgan and Donnie Wernecke memorize all 17 towns and the 14 counties. While we have lost my friends Donnie and John, I’m still up to the task. The communities within Caledonia County are Barnet, Burke, Danville, Groton, Hardwick, Kirby, Lyndon,



New York formally ceded Cumberland and Gloucester counties to the independent state of Vermont in 1777.

Newark, Peacham, Ryegate, Sheffield, St. Johnsbury, Stannard, Sutton, Walden, Waterford and Wheelock.

The name “Caledonia” may be derived from the Scottish Gaelic, meaning “possessing hard feet.”

Soooo... What’s in a name?

In Roman times, there was no such country as Scotland. What we now know as Scotland was called “**Caledonia**,” and the people were known as the “Caledonians.” Linguistics scholar Stefan Zimmer suggests the name is derived from the Scottish Gaelic, meaning “‘possessing hard feet,’ alluding to qualities of steadfastness or endurance.”

Our rocky landscape might have looked familiar to the agents for the Scotch-American Company of Farmers, who purchased the southern half of what is now Ryegate in 1773. Caledonia County takes its name out of regard for these emigrants from Scotland who had large and flourishing settlements in Barnet and Ryegate.

Map of Caledonia County by H.F. Walling, published in 1858.

But what about “Groton”?

For many years I had heard that Groton was named by our first settlers, who were from Groton, Massachusetts. This was a common practice—altogether, 28 Vermont towns (Barre, Bradford and Newbury, among others) share a name with their Massachusetts predecessors.

After re-reading “Mr. Glover’s Groton” I find that the town was probably named after Groton, Massachusetts, but not by the first settlers. In his papers, H.N. Welch, an early and noted town historian, surmises that Groton was given its name when Governor Chittenden granted its charter to Thomas Butterfield on November 7, 1780. Those first settlers arrived six years later. The name may have honored Butterfield’s grandfather, Samuel, who fought to defend Groton (Massachusetts) in 1704. He was captured by the Indians and cruelly treated for fourteen months. Details appear in “Mr. Glover’s Groton,” p. 37, in the 2015 edition.

Soooo... What’s in a name?

A popular theory concludes that the name ‘Groton’ is derived from the Saxon word “**grotan**,” meaning “ground oats” and signifying an agricultural area. The English Groton from which all American Grotons derive their name is a parish in the county of Suffolk, in East Anglia.

Just as our Groton is well known for its state forest, England’s Groton features several “ancient woodlands.” That designation is reserved for woodlands that have existed continuously since 1600 or before. Our name and our forest may be newer, but we still have a few things in common with our English forebears.



*Collection Feature:***Powder horn, owned by Jesse Heath****Item Description:**

Carved animal horn. Horn is inscribed: “Jesse Heath West Point 1780. There is a second, more faint “Je” just below this. The opposite side is decorated with three pine trees. The initials “CH” – “CH” appear to be branded on.

SARAH SPIRA

This powder horn was owned by Jesse Heath, (b. Plaistow, NH date???? - d. Groton, 1839). Jesse Heath was 16 years old when he joined his father to fight against the British in the American Revolution. He, along with his father, Zebediah Heath, fought at the battle of Bunker Hill and Battle of Trenton. The two enlisted with the Continental Army, and spent a winter at Valley Forge.

Their unit was sent to the lake Champlain area to prevent General Burgoyne from isolating the New England States from the rest of the Colonies. Zebediah was a scout and went missing during the battle of Hubbardton. Jesse finished his

enlistment at Fort West Point, NY—the site of the future Military Academy.

The Jesse Heath powder horn is a perfect example of something that was a part of everyday life in Colonial America. Guns were essential tools for personal safety and sources of food, as well as implements of war. At this time, bullets with casing had not yet been invented. Muskets were barrel-loaded and required the handler to skillfully pour gunpowder into the barrel of the gun before dropping the bullet in. Powder horns were used to store gunpowder, and were necessary accessories—whether hunting for food or on the battlefield.

Powder horns in early America were typically made from either ox or cow horn. Well made powder horns would have been watertight, with thin walls so the owner could see how much gunpowder they contained.

The folk art practice of decorating or personalizing a powder horn is well documented, and is similar to that of scrimshaw. Practitioners use a sharp implement—perhaps a needle or

knife—to carve into the surface. They then bring out the design by first rubbing the horn with ash, ink or other pigment and then polishing it with some type of wax to seal in the design.

Common decorative themes include intricate maps, names, dates, rhymes, and locations. These horns and their engravings give us valuable information about the life of the owner.

In 1946, the Metropolitan Museum of Art published a study on “American Engraved Powder Horns.” The study, conducted by Stephen V. Grancsay, the Curator Emeritus of the Department of Arms and Armor, includes Jesse Heath’s horn in the inventory of known horns!

The opening paragraph from this study expresses what it is about an engraved powder horn that captures the imagination:

“The study of powder horns is a pleasant and easy way to learn much about early American art and history When scraped, polished and engraved, an ordinary steer’s horn became a prized possession.”



Jesse Heath was the first person buried in the cemetery in Groton Village. Jesse Heath's daughter was named Phoebe Heath. Phoebe Heath married John Taisey, who built the brick house in Groton. Their daughter Mary J. Taisey married IM Ricker. Mary J. Taisey & IM Ricker erected the marble headstone in the cemetery to replace an earlier and less sturdy slate gravestone.

From Jesse Heath's horn we learn that in 1780 Jesse Heath was with the Continental Army at Fort West Point, in New York. We can only guess the significance of the three carved trees. And what does branded CH mean? We don't know how long the horn was in use, but we can imagine that this represented a significant moment in his life.

Upon returning home from his service in 1781, Jesse married Phoebe Straw of Sandown, New Hampshire, and the two of them made their way north in search of available land. Jesse and Phoebe settled in Groton Territory, on a lot near the present-day Glover Road.

Between 1803 and 1813 Jesse held several civic leadership roles: Town Clerk, Lister, Selectman, School Superintendent, Justice of the Peace, and Captain of the Militia. Jesse built a frame house in 1807 on lot 20. His original log cabin became the first schoolhouse and was used as a meeting room until 1813.

Jesse and Phoebe Heath had six children and lived between Ryegate and Groton. It is presumed that towards the end of his life, Jesse lived with his daughter Sally (John O. Page), and that he gave her the powder horn, which was then passed down through the family.

The Met's survey provides additional documentation on the provenance of the powder horn. It is listed as being owned by ES Page of South Ryegate. In his essay, Dale Brown, a prolific amateur historian of Groton,

writes that Les Page married Elizabeth Hart, and their child Geraldine (Dolly) married Allen Gandin. Allen Gandin generously donated the powder horn to GHS after her death.

GHS Treasurer's Report

A full Treasurer's Report for calendar year 2022 will appear in a future edition. As of November 18, 2022, here is a summary:

With the easing of the Covid 19 pandemic, we opened the Peter Paul House in August and again in October to coincide with Fall Foliage events. Our focus was to help property owners learn more about the history of their property. We were thrilled with the turnout.

Revenues totaled \$3,526 as summarized below:

Membership revenue, including 8 lifetime memberships at \$150	\$1,700
Book and puzzle sales	958
Donation, including \$345 in memorial donations	<u>868</u>
Total revenue	<u>\$3,526</u>

Expenditures totaled \$2,481 as summarized below:

Insurance	\$1,197
Operating expenses (postal, electric, credit card processing)	412
Purchases (books for resale and Beer's map for PPH)	502
Website hosting, domain and monitoring	<u>370</u>
Total expenditures	<u>\$2,481</u>

Excess of revenues over expenses through 11/18/2022 **\$1,045**

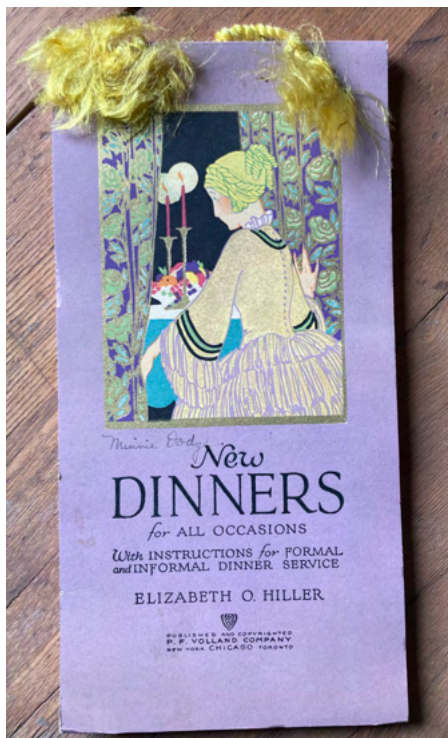
'Tis the season *for a few recipes to raise your spirits*

Linda Nunn's recipe for doughnuts

This recipe comes from Joyce Crane, of Barnet. Her son Gary is from Groton. It will make about 6 dozen doughnuts and holes using a 2.5" cutter.

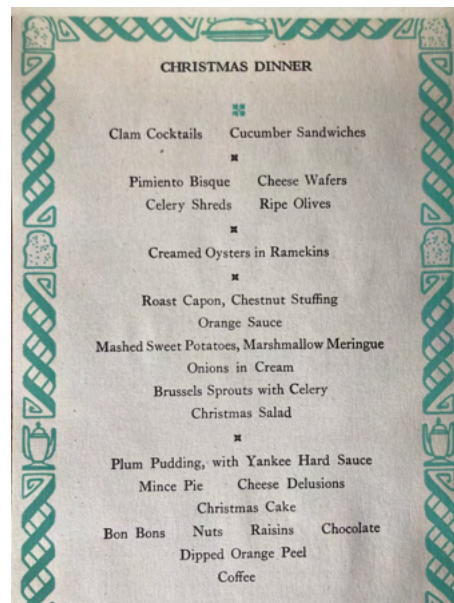
10 eggs
4 cups sugar
4 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 quart buttermilk
12-13 cups flour
4 teaspoons baking soda
8 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons salt
2 teaspoons nutmeg
2 teaspoons cinnamon

Beat the eggs, add sugar and oil and mix thoroughly in a large bowl. Mix the dry ingredients evenly. Add the dry ingredients and the buttermilk to the egg, sugar and oil mixture, alternating dry ingredients and buttermilk until the dough is well mixed. Place the dough on a lightly floured surface, roll it out and cut it with the cutter. Fry doughnuts and holes in lard at 375 degrees—an electric fry pan works well for this.



Elizabeth O. Hiller. "New Dinners for All Occasions." Chicago: P.F. Volland Company, 1920.

If you're feeling like your usual holiday dinner is a little tired and you'd like to liven it up a bit, take some inspiration from Elizabeth O. Hiller's "New Dinners for All Occasions," published in 1920. The recipe "calendar," a gift from the family of Minnie Dodge, hangs by a yellow silk cord and has menus and recipes for each of the 52 weeks of the year. "Cheese Delusions" will certainly add some novelty to your dessert table!



Cheese Delusions

A block of cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup finely chopped nut meats
1/2 teaspoon salt
generous pinch of cayenne

Work the cream cheese until it's smooth. Add 1/4 cup nut meats, salt, and cayenne. Shape in balls the size of an English walnut, then roll the balls in the remaining 1/4 cup finely chopped nut meats. Flatten each ball a bit and place halves of walnuts on either side. Arrange in a pyramid on a doily-covered plate.



The Groton Times was first published by Charles C. Lord in January of 1897, when he moved from West Topsham to Groton. He published the Times for 19 years, followed by S. Burton Heath. The newspaper was then published in Woodsville for several years and finally discontinued in the 1920's. The Vermont Historical Society now has the hard copy, also available on microfiche.

In addition to news, like many local newspapers of the era, the Times spotlighted the doings of its readers—the Knights of Pythias social, the state of the roads ("very muddy, but will soon be dry"), illnesses, particularly the "grippe," funerals, burials and other noteworthy events, such as the following: "Robert, little son of John Gambel, was bitten by a dog, last Saturday. It is hoped nothing serious will result from the bite." *Look for an article on the Times in the spring issue of the newsletter.*

Fall Foliage Day brings the town together once again

Fall Foliage Day brought a strong showing of Groton folks who were interested in learning more about how to research the history of their houses and property.

Many found their homes in the Vermont Historic Register of Houses, which was completed in the 1980's and documents roughly 50 Groton homes. You can find copies of the register at the Peter Paul House and the Groton Free Public Library.

We opened the case holding military artifacts for the first time in years, and with the help of visitors who are Revolutionary and Civil War re-enactors, we learned an enormous amount about the musket and drum, among other things. Janet Puffer showed us how to wind up the Edison phonograph, and we all enjoyed such 1920's classics as "Rose of Washington Square," along with a good selection of John Phillips Sousa marches.

At 1:00 some of us found ourselves sitting along the garage step, waiting for the parade, and when the parade passed by it was endearing to see so many members from the back as they waved at friends and family. Other members grabbed a quick bite to eat during the quiet.

More than one visitor remarked that they would love to live in the Peter Paul House, regardless of the fact that there is no hot water or functioning kitchen sink.



While visitors enjoyed the exhibits in the Peter Paul House and some learned about the history of their own house, the Edison phonograph was playing Sousa marches in the office. The phonograph was a gift from Janet Puffer to the Historical Society in 1987.



Phillip and Lynne Palmer drove the 1954 fire truck, an annual parade favorite. Meanwhile, the Page family was getting some good bites as they floated along Scott Highway. And several members of the Historical Society took a break to applaud the BMU Class of 2023.



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