

# GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

Volume 36 Issue 1

Groton, Vermont

Spring 2023



**Inside look:** When spring finally comes, it's time to open the windows (and wash them!), air out the house, clean the cupboards... and maybe whitewash the milking parlor. Read about spring cleaning rituals past and present from our community, as well as some of the technological innovations that made cleaning easier in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Articles on pages 5-9*

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You are invited  
to the Annual Meeting  
of the Groton Historical Society,  
Tuesday, July 11 at 3 p.m. at the  
Peter Paul House

## Groton's Bedrock Geology

### The foundation of our community

DAVID STONER

*David Stoner, a hydrogeologist who lives in Groton, has worked for four decades to solve a range of environmental problems. Dave has volunteered to write two articles for the GHS newsletter. In this first article, he will discuss the bedrock "basement" foundation of our region.*

*In the second article he will describe the glacial deposits that sit on top of the bedrock and the more modern deposits that have been created or modified following the disappearance of the glaciers 10,000 or so years ago. In short: why we have the rocks and soils that we call "home," or "camp."*

**The geology of Groton is complex, but readers can understand and appreciate that geology at different levels. Like a house, the ground beneath our town has a basement and a structure, with refinements.**

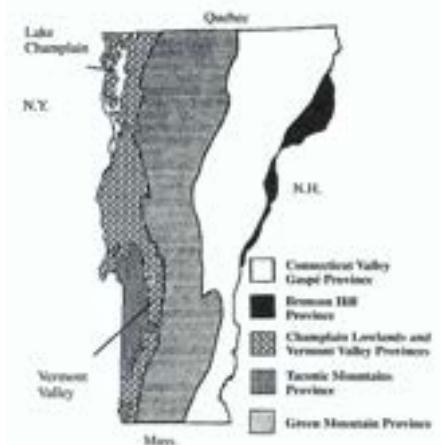
### Bedrock Geology

There are not a lot of flat spots in the state of Vermont, and that certainly includes the town of Groton. The landscape of Vermont comprises a series of rock belts that follow the overall line of the Appalachian Mountains. They extend south from Newfoundland to Georgia.

Our rugged and complex geology is the result of what is referred to as plate tectonics. In simple terms, the crust of the earth is composed of a series of separate plates that float around and bump into the other plates. There are areas of ocean crust, such as the crust under the Atlantic Ocean, and there are areas of continental crust, such as the land mass underlying North America.

Where ocean and continental plates collide, ocean plates tend to be pushed down under continental plates. Where two continental plates collide, neither plate subsides and huge mountains form, such as the Himalayas. Over the course of at least a billion years Vermont has been at the edge of a number of plates that have moved away from an adjacent plate and collided again.

Geologists have identified five zones of rock in Vermont, all running



**Groton sits within the Connecticut Valley Gaspé Province, one of five geologic zones in Vermont.**

north to south, with the oldest rocks to the west and younger rocks to the east. The town of Groton sits within what geologists call the "Connecticut Valley Gaspé Province" (CVG). The oldest rocks, to the west, are as old as one billion years, while our rocks in Groton are a much more youthful 350 million years old.

As that rock in what is now the western part of Vermont eroded into an earlier ocean basin to its east, it created huge deposits of mud, silt, lime-rich mud flats and sand. These deposits were buried and then subjected to the huge forces of an ocean crust plate that collided with a continental plate on its western edge and then plunged beneath

*Continued on p.3*

## President's Report Spring 2023

Local GHS members and officers used the warm space of the Groton Free Public Library for a February 28th planning meeting. It was great to have wifi, comfortable tables and chairs, treats supplied by Phyllis Burke and to be together on a very snowy afternoon!!

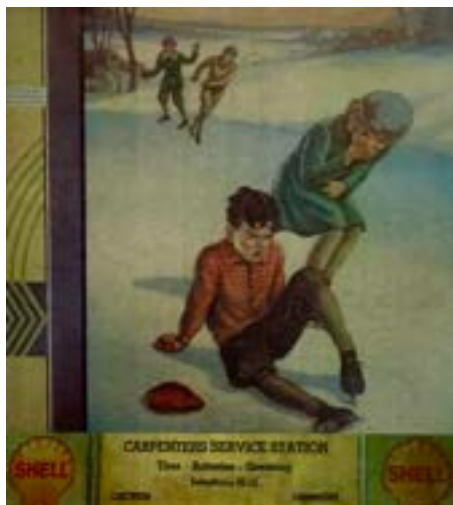
◆  
We set a date for an Annual Meeting on July 11, 2023, to elect Officers and Board Members. This is the first time our membership base has been broad enough to expect to fill those positions. This accomplishment is worth noting.

◆  
The GHS will help the Groton Cemetery Commissioners replace Veterans flags in the cemeteries and record their placement—perhaps on Sunday, May 7th. We are hoping to assemble teams of adults and children to tackle a section of one of the cemeteries. Groton's cemeteries are fabulous places of history, nature, and beautiful monuments. Our local granite businesses made spectacular, unique, and sometimes ingenious monuments that are definitely worth seeing.

Sarah Spira, Librarian, has offered to coordinate with the Historical Society, so if you are interested in participating please contact the grotonlibraryvt@gmail.com

◆  
We approved further work on the GHS website (www.grotonvthistory.org) by Terry Miller, with a few important goals: We voted to post our meeting minutes on the website, so keep an eye out for them. Also on the list is work on the photographs that are currently on the website. Because the photos are inconsistent in size and our website tools are outdated, the captions that describe the photos are not showing! Many of the photos don't have descriptions, but there are a lot that do! If you are interested in helping us standardize these photos so they work with the website, we could really use your help. Terry will coach you through the process. This could be a great late winter/early spring, learning experience!

Email grotonvthistory@gmail.com if interested.



**The Carpenter Service Station sold Shell products, Goodyear tires and Globe batteries. The business, owned by George Carpenter, is listed in the 1939 Groton Community Fair program.**

The month of May will be spring clean-up time at the PPH... Anyone want to help wash windows and dust? It's a nice way to discover nooks and crannies that have undiscovered treasures. Email us.

◆  
We decided to Open the Peter Paul House from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the first Saturday of the month starting in June. Hopefully, this will be a time for visiting with elders, hearing stories and sharing our history with new folks.

Charles Frost, a third generation Groton construction contractor, has offered to be available at the PPH to talk with folks about their old houses when he can. He worked on an awful lot of local houses over his long career, starting as a young man working with his dad.

### From the Newsletter Editor

Articles for the Newsletter require information and ideas from many sources. Where we share analysis, ideas and opinions, we will try to include those sources in the article. Otherwise, you can find our main sources at the end of each article, labeled, "For further reading."

In late August we will be focusing on Bristol Bill and the Counterfeiting Gang that operated in Groton in the 1840's, as well as The Sleeping Sentinel. How were these stories told differently over time by different people, with different slants—and why? Waldo Glover wrote a book called "The Attack on the Sleeping Sentinel." The book recounts Mr. Glover's successful battle to get the story of William Scott's 11th hour pardon set straight after it was misrepresented by a Lincoln biographer in the 1920's. This "war of words" took place in the New York Times and the Boston Globe.

Copies of this book are available at the Groton Free Public Library. In 2018, the Times Argus published an article about Waldo Glover's battle. Here is a link:

[https://www.timesargus.com/an-attack-on-the-sleeping-sentinel/article\\_e9d064d8-dc3c-5569-908d-a169e6930038.html](https://www.timesargus.com/an-attack-on-the-sleeping-sentinel/article_e9d064d8-dc3c-5569-908d-a169e6930038.html)

Happy Spring!  
Deborah Jurist—President

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— ■ ■ ■ —  
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**“Geology of Groton”** *continued*

it, leaving behind the rocks that would become the CVG. As that ocean plate edge plunged down and westward, sediments first became sedimentary rock, and then, with high temperatures and high pressure, deformed into metamorphic rock.

Some of the rock melted as it plunged and that molten rock broke through in scattered locations, forming granite plugs. The material that had once been ocean sediments was transformed into sedimentary rock and then, under greater temperature and pressure, metamorphosed into schists, phyllites, quartzites and marbles in parts of the CVG.

Additionally, some of those sedimentary layers were heated and deformed into giant folds, many miles across. A dramatic example of these

folds is visible on I-89 in the roadside cut between the Montpelier and Barre exits at the top of the hill. There, the rock face exhibits as bands and folds, primarily of phyllites or schists.

**Granites**

The granite bodies that are found throughout the town of Groton result from the intrusion of molten rock that found its way up through the overlying metamorphic rock. The most notable of these may be Owls Head Mountain, slightly north of our boundary.

The presence of granite in Groton led to the operation of at least one quarry and a number of granite cutting operations in town. There may have been some smaller quarries in the area, but the only one of significance was the Benzie Quarry, located about a mile southwest of the Groton Post office.

This quarry opened in 1896 and was still operating in the 1920's.

John Benzie (the grandfather of former GHS newsletter editor Willard Benzie) and his brother Andrew owned granite manufacturing companies operating out of three stone sheds along the south side of the railroad tracks in the early 1900's. The Benzie granite was used for both monuments and buildings. In a 1909 U.S. Geological Survey bulletin, “The Granites of Vermont,” author T. Nelson Dale noted the Dr. S.N. Eastman monument in Groton and the Davison monument in Woodsville as good examples of the Benzie's Vermont Blue. The quarry is described as “water-filled” in a 1971 state survey of highway construction materials in Groton; a look at Google Earth suggests it's a good swimming hole today.

*Continued on p.4*



**The Bonazzi Quarry (formerly Benzie) c. 1900, looking northeast to Blue Mountain. The Benzie Quarry was known for its “Vermont Blue” granite.**

**Bedrock Geology:  
A Glossary of Terms**

**Igneous Rock:** formed by the cooling and solidifying of molten materials. Igneous rocks can form beneath the Earth's surface, or at its surface as lava.

**Marble:** granular limestone of dolomite (i.e., rock comprised of magnesium-calcium carbonate) that has been recrystallized under the influence of heat and pressure.

**Metamorphic rock:** rock that has undergone transformation by heat and/or pressure.

**Phyllite:** muddy sediments that, when buried, become shale. Shale, when subjected to elevated pressure and temperature, first becomes slate, and as temperature and pressure continue to be elevated, becomes phyllite.

**Plate tectonics:** a scientific theory that explains how major landforms are created as a result of sections of the Earth's crust moving around, independent of one another

**Sedimentary rock:** a type of rock formed from the accumulation or deposition of mineral or organic materials at the earth's surface followed by cementation and/or a hardening from compression or mineralogical changes.

**Schist:** a metamorphic rock of the same origin as phyllite, but having been subject to higher temperature and more pressure.



**“Geology of Groton”** *continued*

The biggest challenge to the granite mining business in Groton was the difficulty and cost of transportation. In the USGS bulletin, Dale wrote that the Benzie Quarry granite was “carted” one and a half miles to the cutting sheds. Horses or oxen would have pulled those carts.

Generally, however, the granite business would not have been possible without the railroad line that ran between Montpelier and Woodsville between 1873 and 1956. Imagine the difficulty of moving pieces of granite weighing, on average, 175 pounds per cubic foot. Sources suggest the transportation cost became so great that it almost was the death knell of the three quarries and several stone sheds in Barre. The construction, in 1888, of the Barre & Chelsea “Skyline” Railroad, which ran from the quarries to the stone sheds in Barre Village saved those operations. Smaller operations throughout the state could not keep up.

There were probably a dozen granite cutting sheds in Groton at one time, cutting stone from Barre and Groton. Closure of the railroad in 1956 must have been a huge blow to the granite industry, but also to farms and businesses of all kinds in Groton.



Washington, DC’s Union Station features “Bethel White” granite from Bethel, VT. The contract to provide the stonework, awarded to the E.B. Ellis Company of Northfield, was the largest single stone-cutting contract ever awarded for a building in the United States, according to the Barre Granite Association.



**Benzie Quarry workers.** The quarry, opened in 1896, was located about a mile southwest of the Groton Post Office, off what is now Powder Mill Road. The granite was carted one and a half miles to the cutting sheds along the south side of the railroad tracks.

## For further reading...

For those who would like to dig deeper into this topic, here are three sources that will help:

“**The Geology of Vermont,**” written by Dr. Barry Doolan, is available online through the State of Vermont archives. This paper primarily discusses the formation of the rocks that shape the backbone of our rugged state.

A second paper, available through the Vermont Geologic Survey, is “**The Surficial Geology and Hydrogeology of the Groton 7.5 Minute Quadrangle, Vermont.**” This paper describes the nature and formation of the materials that overlie the bedrock. Most of these materials were deposited by glacial ice as it moved over Vermont, or were deposited by the ice as it melted.

In “**Hands on the Land,**” Jan Albers offers a fascinating look at our inadvertent modification of the ground as she examines some of the factors that have altered the land in Vermont as a result of human activity over the last couple hundred years. The book is published by the MIT Press on behalf of the Orton Family Foundation.



This granite piece, now outside the Peter Paul House, was once the capstone of the “receiving tomb” for the Groton Village Cemetery. The vault, erected by the town in 1893, was used to store the deceased in the months when the frozen ground made burials impossible.

*‘By keeping a clean, neat, well-ordered home...’*

# Household Chores are a Fact of Life

SARAH SPIRA  
LOUISE REYNOLDS

In the early part of the 19th century, there were few labor-saving devices for rural women. They spent much of their day hauling wood from the wood pile, making and tending the cook stove fire, pickling, canning, baking, and preparing meals. They lugged and heated water for washing, bathing and cleaning. And they accomplished the most dreaded of a homemaker’s weekly tasks: the laundry. It would be the end of the 1860’s before innovations began to appear that would make these tasks easier.

By the close of the 19th century, ideas about cleanliness and hygiene were changing. While scientists blamed “germs” for diseases like cholera and typhoid fever, popular literature of the period warned women more generally against keeping a house that exhibited poor hygienic standards. In a Library of Congress video, “The History of Household Technology,” historian Constance Carter described the advice women received from the housekeeping magazines of the day: “... By keeping a clean, neat, well-ordered home and filling it with warmth, inviting smells, and Christian charity, women could achieve their highest calling.”

Innovations like the American Universal Wringer washer and the Reeves Suction vacuum allowed women to complete tasks more efficiently, saving energy for other household chores.



This 1929 ad for Dutch Cleanser illustrates popular culture’s message to homemakers: household chores now provided her an “opportunity” to demonstrate her devotion to her family.

## Laundry Day: The ‘great domestic dread’



### Collection feature: The American Universal Wringer Washing Machine

In the mid-nineteenth century, women cleaned their family’s clothing as they had since the washboard was invented in 1833: by rubbing each piece against a frame of corrugated wood or metal in a tub of hot, soapy water. The lye soap, the hot water and the rubbing action, not to mention hauling and heating the water for multiple washes and rinses, all took a physical toll on both the laundress and the clothing.

In the mid-1800’s, Rachel Haskell, a frontier housewife in Nevada wrote in her diary that wash day represented “the

great domestic dread of the household.”

In her popular guide for new homemakers, published in 1903, home economist Helen Campbell assigned Monday to this arduous task: clothing was generally changed on Sunday, and, because the kitchen range was occupied with heating water for the laundry, Monday’s supper should consist of leftovers from the Sunday roast. Other references suggest that by starting on Monday, the efficient housewife could accomplish the drying, whitening and ironing of the clean clothing in time for her family’s appearance at church services the following Sunday.

By the mid-1800’s the United States was experiencing a technological revolution. As the nation expanded westward and

*Continued on p. 6*



**“Wringer Washer”** *continued*

the population grew, an expanding middle class had more money to spend on labor-saving devices. Clothes washing in particular benefitted from this interest—would-be inventors filed more than two thousand U.S. patents for washing machine innovations beginning in 1805 to the end of the century.

Mechanical devices that would eventually constitute the American Wringer Company’s “Universal Wringer” washing machine, like the one in the cellar of the Peter Paul House, were patented in the last half of the century. The “dolly stick,” for example, looked like a miniature four or five-legged stool attached to a stick.

The homemaker twisted the stick one direction, then another in the tub full of clothes, to agitate the laundry through the soapy water. Later inventors attached a mechanical version of the dolly stick to the inside of a tub’s cover, which the operator would turn with a two-handed lever or a wheel.

The mechanical wringer, which was first attached to wooden wash tubs, was introduced in the 1860’s. However, the rubber-coated wringer that eventually became another integral part of the American Wringer Company’s “Universal Wringer” washing machine is credited to Ellen Elgin, who invented—and patented in 1888—an adjustable wringer.

The device reaped handsome profits for manufacturers of the period. The American Wringer Company bought hundreds such patents for improvements to its washing machines. But Elgin, a housekeeper for a Washington, D.C. family, made only \$18 when she sold the rights to the patent to an agent. Interviewed by a writer for “The Woman Inventor,” an 1891 publication celebrating the centennial of the U.S. Patent Office, Elgin said, “You know, I am black, and if it was known that a Negro woman patented the invention, white ladies would not buy the wringer...”

While the wringer washer was a major labor-saver, clothes still needed to be hung outside to dry on a clothesline, or hung in the attic (or draped on furniture or racks in the kitchen) to dry. This was a challenge in the winter or in the rain. The LOC’s Carter describes the “virtues of hanging a ‘proper clothes line,’” an



**This photo of a woman in Lincoln, Vermont, from the Library of Congress archives, illustrates just one of the many steps some women took to accomplish the laundry chore in 1940.**

art passed down from mother to daughter, with undergarments hung on the insidelines, shielded from view by sheets and pillowcases.

Although many (male) inventors patented improvements to the washing machine in the last half of the nineteenth century, it wasn’t until 1908 that the first electric-powered washing machines appeared, and much longer before

women in rural areas could enjoy them. In 1909, electric street lights brightened Groton village streets, but it would take decades before the entire town gained access to electricity. A quick look at the history of plumbing makes clear that hot piped water, a bath or shower and a flush toilet would still be missing in almost half of American homes in 1940.

No matter how much technology might have lightened women’s load, they spent as much time at housework as their mothers had. A comprehensive study covering four years in the 1920’s and ‘30’s found rural farm homemakers spent an average of 61 hours a week on household chores—little change from twenty years earlier.

As advertising became more sophisticated after World War I, women’s magazines portrayed housework not so much as a chore but as an opportunity for the housewife to demonstrate her devotion to her family. The American Universal Wringer washer might have made laundry day easier, but there was always more work to be done—and often, higher home-making standards to be met.

*This American Universal Wringer washing machine, ca.1885, was a gift to the GHS from Joe Davis, in memory of his parents, Ida and Gene Davis.*



**The American Wringer Company promoted its bench wringer with this trade card. The right panel illustrates the newfound “ease” of the laundry task as one woman cranks clothes from a tub of soapy water through the wringer to a tub with clean water on the bench below. Whoever used the Universal Wringer Washer in the Peter Paul House, unfortunately, likely had the experience illustrated on the left panel.**

*Collection feature:*

## The Reeves Suction Sweeper: Progress for ‘Modern Household Sanitation’

Inventors have filed patents for untold numbers of devices to improve home maintenance, most of them designed to ease the labor of homemakers as they tidy up. At the turn of the 19th century, ideas about cleanliness and germs were changing, in part due to the discovery of “germs.” Advertising, as well as articles in popular women’s magazines, promoted the connection—often with some exaggeration—between dust and illness. Sweeping carpets with a corn broom, or taking them outside during spring and fall cleaning for a good beating, gave way to more advanced technology in many households. An early example, the Bissel mechanical carpet sweeper, first patented in 1876, is still being used today.

Still, homemakers—and inventors—worried that sweeping simply stirred up the dust, rather than trapping it. This Reeves suction sweeper offers an example of a brief stop along the evolutionary path from mechanical sweeper to iRobot’s Roomba.

The Reeves Vacuum Cleaner Company was based in Milford, Connecticut. An advertisement in the Saturday Evening Post and Good Housekeeping

from 1915 describes the Reeves Vacuum Cleaner as a “must for modern household sanitation.” The suction sweeper consists of two overlapping metal tubes with a suction nozzle attached to one end and a wooden handle at the other. The operator pumped the wooden handle up and down to create a vacuum while moving the nozzle over the carpet. The vacuum in

the advertisement, similar to the model in the collection of the Groton Historical Society, sold for \$5, the equivalent of \$149 today.

More enduring was James Murray Spangler’s invention of an electric-powered “suction sweeper,” which he patented in 1908. Spangler was a janitor in Canton, Ohio who suffered from asthma, made worse by sweeping the rugs nightly in the department store where he worked. He pieced together his vacuum

sweeper from a tin soapbox, a sateen pillowcase, a fan and a brush, an electric motor and a broom handle. After his wife tried the device and was happy with it, William H. Hoover bought Spangler’s patent and made room in his leather-goods company to assemble the sweeper. The rest is vacuum cleaner history.



**The Reeves Suction Sweeper, described as a “must for modern household sanitation,” required the operator to pump the wooden handle up and down to create a vacuum.**

Sales and manufacture of motorized vacuum cleaners didn’t really take off until the period of economic growth after the First World War. In 1925 only half of American homes were electrified, most in cities and towns. After World War II and the growth of the middle class and the suburbs, the vacuum cleaner became an essential appliance for homemakers; in 1950 about fifty-one percent of households owned an electric vacuum. Today, if you want to get a better workout while you vacuum, you can find a Reeves Suction Sweeper on eBay for \$63.99, plus shipping. Or, similar in shape and size, a Dyson Cyclone V10 Animal stick vacuum for \$450. The suction sweeper has come a long way.

*This Reeves Suction Sweeper, ca. 1915, was donated to the GHS by Mike and Sally Blair.*

## For further reading...

“**History of Household Technology.**” For a broad look at household chores and housekeeping, Constance Carter, a senior Librarian at the Library of Congress, describes the evolution in the technology of washing machines, irons and stoves and its effect on the work of women in the home. You can find this video—or a transcript—on the Library of Congress website, LOC.gov.

If you want a truly deep dive, “**Housewifery, a manual and text book of practical housekeeping,**” written by Lydia Ray Balderston in 1919, is available through Google Books. Type the author’s name in the search function and just underneath, click on the “Books” tab.

Do you remember the American Heritage hardcover “magazine”? It went digital in 2017, so now it’s available to everyone—including archived issues. Their article on the vacuum cleaner (aptly titled “The Vacuum Cleaner,” was the best. You can find it—and a lot of other interesting information—by searching [AmericanHeritage.com](http://AmericanHeritage.com).



# A look at spring cleaning over the decades

*The technology may have changed, but most of us agree... it's still a lot of work*

What are the four seasons in Vermont? Summer, fall, winter and... mud season. Keeping a clean house during those last two is no mean feat. Still, as the Vermont Country Store notes in a promo for its time-tested cleaning supplies, "we welcome the challenge; it goes along with being invigorated by the first warm, wet breezes and the crocuses pushing up through the snow." The GHS asked readers to tell us about their spring cleaning routines—and memories of those from the past. Here's what they shared.

## We spring clean!

Outside, we rake the yard and clear the gardens. Inside is a solo act. I clean the windows, clean the cupboards (especially the pantry) Clean out my bureau. Throw the curtains in the dryer with a couple of wet rags (my mom's old trick) to sort of dust them off. Vacuum under the rugs and then mop under the rugs (though I have no idea why!). Clean the closets (or at least pull out stuff that's on the floor and vacuum the closet floor) Wash the washable pillows. Vacuum the mattresses.

I think that's about it ... oh - I hate it.  
HAHAHAHAHA

**Janet Page**

**We always did a spring and fall cleaning.** Wiped the walls down, washed windows, cleaned curtains. Maybe cleaned cupboards and closets!

**Storme Odell**

**The Spring routines I remember most** growing up in Groton are maple sugaring, changing clothing from winter woolies to summer cottons, and planting flowers on our relatives' graves for Decoration Day.

Changing our clothes from the winter woolies to the summer cottons never came soon enough. We had to unpack the summer clothes that had been stored in my Mother's Hope Chest over the winter. The winter clothes had to be washed in the ringer washer in the cellar (we never called it a basement) and hung out on the clothes line to dry before being packed away with moth balls for the summer.

It was almost summer before we ventured to the cemeteries to plant flowers on our relatives graves for Decoration Day the next to last day in May. My Dad used to start flowering plants earlier in the house along with the garden plants so they would be blooming when we planted them at the cemeteries. He would never plant his garden until after Decoration Day trying to avoid losses from a late spring frost.

**J. Willard Benzie**

## Sun porch window cleaning—

I guess that's my major project. Cleaning all the windows and washing the curtains is a major spring chore. We no longer burn wood, but we have a pellet stove, which creates a lot of pellet dust. So if I'm ambitious, the lamp shades and upholstery are included in spring cleaning.

I remember, as a young wife living in our town's 1837 historical society house, burning coal in the old kitchen range. It had been converted to coal from wood at some point, probably because coal gives a much hotter fire... but the smoke and dust from the coal was smudgy and greasy. It couldn't be dusted off, but had to be washed... If you lived in a town with lots of coal-burning trains going through, that was another source of that awful smoke. Here in Groton there were four trains a day.

**Phyllis Burke**

**Harry's mom was a devoted spring cleaner.** Bedding was stripped, curtains came down and were washed and aired. Walls and ceilings were scrubbed. The floors were mopped; the windows washed with newspaper. Rugs were beaten with a device that looks like a scroll thing. Cupboards were emptied and cleaned out.

Winter clothes and blankets were put away and summer weight clothes and bedding came out. Harry's mom, called "Nana," used a lot of Clorox. She had a housekeeper to help with the work. She had been a housekeeper herself, but when she married, she worked in either the Chandler green house or Hovey's Department Store. Both were very long established businesses in St. Johnsbury.

**Judy Chandler**





*"Spring Cleaning" continued*

# Vermont women are strong

## Celebrating Mrs. Phebe Heath Taisey

### Her Eighty-seventh Birthday.

HONORING THE AGED MOTHER OF SEVENTEEN CHILDREN.

The 87th birthday of Mrs. Phebe Heath Taisey was fittingly celebrated at her home in Groton last week Tuesday. Among those present were six of her eight living children, several grandchildren, great grandchildren and about twenty other relatives. The talk was entirely informal and the party passed a very enjoyable day exchanging greetings, congratulations and reminiscences.

Mrs. Taisey is a remarkable woman. Married in 1814 at the age of seventeen, she has given birth to seventeen children and has never left the old farm homestead except on occasional short visits. Now, in her old age, she lives under the same roof with three other generations and is as sprightly as half of her children. She lives in her own rooms and does all of her own work, even bringing in from outdoors her wood and water, arguing that the exercise does her good. Her life has been one of nearly perfect health, she having never been seriously ill although subjected to great exposure during the earlier and greater part of her life.

When she and her husband, John Taisey, moved on to their farm in 1817, the whole country was a wilderness. There was not even a store in Groton, and all of their goods had to be brought by an ox team from the old town of Peacham, then in its pristine glory. To obtain their first yoke of oxen, the husband chopped and burned hard wood trees, taking the ashes to the house. A strong lye was drawn from these ashes, boiled into salts and then taken to Peacham and sold to be made into saleratus. All the sugar Mrs. Taisey had the second year of her married life, she made herself under difficulties such as have been unknown for a long time. The sugar trees were forty rods from the house and she gathered the sap when the snow was so deep that she had to wear her husband's trousers, carrying her child with one arm and a bucket of sap with the other. Many similar hardships were endured, but the hardest time came in 1842, when the brick house now standing was built. It was necessary to manufacture the brick on the premises and there were twenty in the family. At the same time she was caring for her youngest child, only a few months old,

*From the St. Johnsbury Caledonian, Feb. 7, 1884, courtesy  
newspapers.com*

**I can remember my Mother**, Theresa Cassady Shepard telling about her mother, Meroa Emery Cassady, doing spring cleaning. Everything was dusted and cleaned. This included the "shed chamber" (attic) and the cellar. The dirt floor was swept and all of the canned goods were wiped clean. All the furniture was turned upside down, dusted and polished. The blankets and carpets were taken outside and beat with the straw broom. The stovepipes were taken down and washed inside and out. No one was allowed to help; she did it herself. Grampa and my mother had to stay outside. My grandmother would take a week or so to do this. The hot water was heated on the wood stove in a kettle. She worked hard cleaning the home.

Then, after the house, the milk house and the barn was done too in the same manner. She died at age 77 and she continued doing this practice just as long as her health allowed.

*Meroa "Peep" Shepard Benjamin*



The Cassady house ca. 1910. Henry Cassady and his mother, Jane Priest Cassady.

**Maple sugaring** was in early Spring. We used 50 to 60 wooden sap buckets that my great grandfather made as my grandfather had given up sugaring by then. This is one of his buckets, now in Troy Oliver's sugarhouse. The buckets and sap spouts had to be washed after storage from the previous year, as well as the milk cans we used to gather the sap. We tapped maple trees near Keenan Pond on the Topsham Road. Trees were tapped with a wood bit and hand brace (no power tools in the 1930's and 40's), sap spouts were hammered in and sap buckets hung, sometimes two or three on large trees. I built a small arch with loose bricks, no mortar, to hold a three by five foot boiling pan. The arch was built inside the remnants of a playhouse for shelter, but the sides were open. When the sap was boiling I hung a piece of salt pork over the pan to prevent it from boiling over. We made several gallons of maple syrup each year. During WWII my Mother kept all the rationed sugar for baking and canning, so we used maple syrup on our cereal, in our drinks, and anything that needed sweetening.



*J. Willard Benzie*



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