



THE HISTORIAN



VOLUME IV, ISSUE FOUR

SPRING 2019



Jacob Thompson House 1811



Fuller House 1869

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings:

Quite a bit has been going on at the Jacob Thompson House. Bill Dominick and Tamara Cabey have taken it upon themselves to spearhead the repair and restoration of the small room to the rear of the attic. After cleaning out all of the material that had been stored there for years, work has begun on the missing portions of the woodwork, and the original plaster is being repaired and preserved as much as possible. They will be interpreting this room as a hired man's room, which would have been used to put up men hired for day labor on the Thompson farm. We hope to furnish it with, what would have been at

the time considered, cast-off furniture that would surely be out of style. The Thompsons also took in students from Monson Academy and they could have also occupied this room. Hopefully, in the spring, we can have an open house to showcase this room.

Also, I have good news. The Monson Historical Society has been awarded a \$750.00 grant from the Grace Makepeace Trust for Historic Preservation to purchase a book scanner and new digital camera. I am sure all of you know how hard it is to scan a book on a flat bed scanner and achieve any sort of quality. This new scanner will scan the open book just as it lies there and the

software that comes with it will make up for the distortion of the curved pages and produce a perfectly flat document. We hope to be able to scan books such as town reports and street lists in their entirety and make them available online. The camera will be used to photograph oversized documents such as posters, blueprints, maps, and any three-dimensional objects in our collection.

Dennis



One more thing ... it is that time of year for membership renewals (May 1st). Refer to the last page for instructions on renewing your membership. Thank you!

- Dennis Swierad**—President, Historian and Genealogist
- Tamara Cabey**—Vice President and Rental Manager
- Leona Brahen**—Secretary, Webmaster and Newsletter Editor
- Kevin McNabb**—Treasurer
- Paul DeMaio**—Board Member and Building/Grounds Manager
- William Dominick**—Board Member
- Denis Duquette**—Board Member, Membership Director and Publicity
- Mary Swierad**—Accessionist and Collection Manager
- EmmaLadd Shepherd**—Board Member Emeritus

Mission Statement

To obtain and preserve historical data and articles pertaining to the town of Monson, Massachusetts, and to encourage and develop the pursuit and expression of such interests in all suitable ways.

Visit us on the web at www.monsonhistoricalsociety.org

Email us at monsonhistoricalsocietyinc@gmail.com

Do you need information about the history of Monson? Write, call or email us. We may be able to help.

MONSON 215 YEARS AGO

By Dennis Swierad

This month's story is a little different. While looking through a copy of the *Monsonia*, put out by the Monson Academy on the occasion of its 100th anniversary in 1904, I found an article written by Edward F. Morris. It is a narrative of what Mr. Morris thought Monson would have looked like in 1804, during the dawn of Monson Academy. I hope you enjoy reading Mr. Morris' interpretation of what Monson was like then.

One Century Ago.

EDWARD F. MORRIS.

It would be an enjoyable privilege if we might look in on the town and village of Monson, and the institutions here extant, as they existed about one hundred years ago. The district had been separated from its mother, the town of Brimfield, less than fifty years, and the town had been incorporated less than thirty years. The town was named by Governor Pownal, in honor of Lord Monson. The population of the town was about sixteen hundred, nearly all being farmers, many of them several miles from the center. Most of them were poor, not having recovered from the effects of the

war for liberty, in which they had been early participants, and for which they had made great sacrifices. It was at first supposed that the center village would be built on the east hill, along the wide highway laid out in 1737, that runs northerly and southerly on that eminence; and the first town meeting, the original warrant for which is still preserved, was held in 1760 in a log house, then standing near the site of the dwelling occupied for many years by the late Sylvanus King. But small industrial plants had been located in the valley, along its water course, such as a mill for

the manufacture of linseed oil, on the site of the present mill of D. W. Ellis & Son, a grist mill a little farther to the north, a mill for wool carding and spinning near the site of the present mill of S. F. Cushman & Sons, a saw and grist mill at North Monson; and the village had begun to materialize on the northerly portion of its present location. On the westerly side of Main street there stood a small one-story dwelling, on the present site of the Monson house. This dwelling was the first one occupied by Timothy H. Brown and his wife Phebe Hinsdale Brown, after their removal to this town. From that dwelling, northerly, along the west side of Main street, there was no building until reaching the dwelling of Elisha Russ, which stood on the site of the present residence of Miss Holmes. On the easterly side of Main street, until the erection of the academy, there was but a one-story dwelling, the same now standing in the rear of the bank block, which dwelling then stood up to the street line on the present site of said block. This portion of the village was called "the flat," and it still retained that name up to a period within the memory of the writer. Much of the soil was naturally wet, and at that time it was deemed unfit for residential purposes.

Dr. Hammond says "For many years after the academy was built, it was almost the sole companion of the church, (that being the second edifice, erected in 1803), and with the Norcross tavern, (now Century hotel), a store and half a dozen dwellings, the entire village was constituted." There was no post office until 1820. The first institution of the town in point of date was the Congregational church, organized in 1762, the second institution was the common school, the third, Monson academy. It is further to be noted that a Baptist church had been located on the western border of the town, for the joint use of those of that denomination residing in Monson, and in the south parish of

Wilbraham, now the town of Hampden. It will serve our present purpose if we confine our attention to the academy, now venerable in a green old age, which has occupied, and still occupies, a highly appreciated and honored position in this vicinity.

For about a century this town was divided into school districts, schools for a part of the year having been generally established, in which the branches taught were reading, penmanship and arithmetic. Teachers for these schools were examined and licensed by the minister of the parish. A portion of the expense of maintaining them was paid by the pupils. The colony of Massachusetts Bay, in 1647, prescribed such schools in every town of one hundred householders. During the last years of the eighteenth century there had been in Massachusetts a revival of public interest in increased facilities for education. In the General Court of 1797 this interest resulted in providing grants from the public lands (now the state of Maine) to sundry academies within this Commonwealth, where there were none at present, they producing satisfactory evidence that the proceeds should be secured to the use of the institution, and the location be approved by the General Court. Such academies were to be distributed to accommodate different localities of the state, and were to be considered a part of the public system of education. Heretofore most preparation for college had been made under private tutors. While academies were designed to afford means for preparation for higher institutions, their usefulness was also emphasized for the large majority of youth who could not hope to enjoy collegiate privileges, but who by this means might obtain a higher English education. They were public schools, because constituted by legislative authority, and free, because open to all comers, on the payment of a moderate tuition, without regard to sect or social condition; and even to natives of foreign lands; in marked contrast with

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the gymnasia of Europe, whose privileges were only for favored classes. They were to be governed by boards of trustees, representing contiguous localities, whose youth might be expected to patronize the school. Their discipline was designed to resemble that of the college, and it was expected that only college graduates would be employed as teachers. That the founders of this grade of schools entertained high expectations of their character and success, in promoting secondary, and so higher education, is indicated by their designation of them, after the Athenian school of Academus. It was under such conditions, briefly stated, that Monson academy had its origin; the work of its promotion having been actively taken up in 1803. The original subscription for the pecuniary foundation is preserved, and the following is a copy thereof, omitting the sums subscribed, which varied from five to three hundred dollars each, the aggregate exceeding three thousand dollars:—

“We, the subscribers, wishing to promote learning and useful knowledge among the youth and rising generation in this vicinity, for that purpose do promise and agree and by these presents bind ourselves to pay the several sums set to our names, for the laudable purposes of erecting and supporting an Academy in the town of Monson. Each subscriber to have privilege of paying in building materials, and labor that may be wanted for the building, in proportion to the sum he subscribes. Said sums to be paid at the time and place that may be agreed upon by the subscribers. Provided we can get incorporated by the General Court for that purpose. If not, this instrument is to be null and void and of no effect.

Monson, 12th of January, 1804.

Azel Utley, Joel Norcross, Rufus Flynt, Amos Norcross, Abel Goodell, Ebenezer Davison, Nathan Hoar, Jonathan Chapin, Samuel Groves, Simeon Tupper, Jeremy Munn, Elijah Carroll, Asa Avery, George Colton, Gad Colton,

James Shaw, Abner Brown, Asa Gates, Marsena Munn, Asa White, Ede Whitaker, Elisha Russ, Calvin Vinton, Luther Carter, Leavins Shumway, Elijah Hovey, Parley Truesdell, Thomas Skinner, James Stebbins, Jude Fay, John Allard, Jesse Stebbins, Chester Blanchard, William Norcross, Timothy Packard, John Smith, Silas Taft, Stephen Newton, William Puffer, Royal Merrick.”

In addition to the above mentioned subscription, there were special donations of a bell and physical and surveying apparatus. All the donors were residents of Monson.

To those liberal and earnest founders of this institution, succeeding generations are under lasting obligations. As to holdings of property, it was a day of small things, very few being possessed of much means. But the men of that generation, few of whom had received the advantages of higher schools, were desirous that coming generations might enjoy them. They builded wisely, and their successors have enjoyed the fruits of their labor.

Consider the outgrowths of this pecuniary foundation, as a noble charity, in the inspiration and preparation through the century of many thousands of youth, who have made homes in all parts of our own country, in oriental lands and around the world, carrying the benefits of civilization and Christianity. To catalogue such benefits would require more than the pen of a ready writer, more than the comprehension of human ken.

Of the building erected from the proceeds of the above subscription, Dr. Hammond said, “The people of Monson had indeed good reason to be proud of their new seminary, furnished as it seemed to them with ample funds, and having an Academy hall which they had themselves erected, which, for size and elegant finish, was not surpassed in that day by any other edifice, built for educational purposes, in western Massachusetts.” But although they had provided

so ample an habitation for the new institution, they realized that its character and influence would largely depend on considerations, other than its material form. The location of the Academy was selected by Rev. Jesse Ives, pastor of the local church, who died before the building was completed. Of the many self-sacrificing donations of time and treasure, which have since been bestowed upon this institution, the purpose of this article does not allow mention, but all have been insufficient for its greatest usefulness, and it has been said that Monson had lived and flourished more by its good behavior, than by the strength of its pecuniary foundation. When the citizens of the mother town learned that a charter for an Academy in Monson had been applied for, they put forth most urgent efforts, and employed all available means, to secure it for their own community. That it was established here was due, among other influences, to the untiring efforts of Abner Brown, Esq., a highly respected citizen of Monson, who represented the town in the General Court for many years. It was also largely through his efforts that the subsequent grant of Maine land was made; also because, to a good degree, of his example, that the colony from this town emigrated to what is now the town of Monson, Maine; thus rendering the grant of pecuniary value to this institution. At that time the Maine wilderness was two to three weeks distant, the journey being usually made by means of oxen. The usual hardships and privations of a new country were the lot of its first settlers. The amount ultimately realized by the Academy from its land grant was less than ten thousand dollars.

On our visit to Monson, a century ago, we should have learned that the person in town of most liberal education was the pastor of the church, Rev. Jesse Ives, a graduate of Yale college in 1758, whose residence here was in the period between 1773 and 1805, who took a special interest and performed a large part in

founding the new institution. Besides Mr. Ives, Dr. Ede Whitaker, the principal physician of the place, had pursued his professional studies under a private tutor, but was not a college graduate. Dr. Whitaker had a prominent part in founding the Academy, and subsequently acted as clerk of its board of trustees for more than twenty years.

Educationally, at least, these two men were the stars of the community; they are mentioned to show, by contrast, the nearly universal ignorance then prevailing, as to higher scholastic learning. Preparation for college, while requiring Latin, did not require a knowledge of English Grammar or Geography. Dr. Hammond said, referring to this period, "The college course was confined almost entirely to such Latin authors as are now read as condition of admission, and nothing in Greek, except the New Testament. Algebra was hardly heard of, and chemistry was a black art."

The above facts, so briefly stated, are here inserted for the purpose of suggesting what was the meaning to the inhabitants of this town and vicinity of the establishment here of an Academy, for secondary education, one hundred years ago.

Moreover, Monson was from the beginning open for the admission of youth of both sexes, which was not the case with all institutions of like grade; thus providing about a generation before the noble thought of Mary Lyon of a female seminary, an opportunity for young women to obtain a higher education than that afforded by the grammar schools. Let our women reflect upon the opportunities which became available to their sex, by the founding of a class of schools, of which Monson Academy was an example and a pioneer.

In our supposed visit to the Academy, we would have found Rev. Simeon Colton, not only principal, but sole instructor; a fact not surprising when we learn that Yale college had at one time but four instructors. The influence of a

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teacher has never been measured by the number of his pupils. Dr. Colton was a teacher of unusual energy, and was well equipped for his work. The new institution was not possessed of a library, or of maps or charts for classical studies. Of a library which was installed later, an alumnus say, "This library we all might look at through the glass doors, but no student, in my day, was ever allowed to look into it." There were four terms in each year. Tuition was two and a half dollars per term.

That the Academy, in its inception, did not suffer for lack of rules, is evidenced by the following extracts from its by-laws:—

"Youths of both sexes who can read and write in a decent manner, (and only such), may be admitted into the academy."

"The scholars belonging to the Academy shall be in subjection to the authority and government of it. They shall be orderly and studious, seasonable in their attendance, peaceable among themselves, decent in their behavior and apparel, and particularly attentive to all the exercises on which they shall be

directed to attend. They shall pay particular deference and respect to their instructors."

"The scholars shall conduct with becoming propriety in the families where they board. They shall behave orderly while in their rooms; they shall keep reasonable hours, endeavor to be at their rooms before nine o'clock each night, and on Saturday nights at dark."

"No student shall be permitted to take fruit from the fields or orchards of any person, or enter into them, without permission from the owner."

"Such part of these laws and regulations as relate to the conduct of the scholars shall be read on every Saturday, during the first quarter, and afterwards on the first Saturday of each month."

We have thus imperfectly stated something of the plan of the Academy foundation, and of the conditions here prevailing, about an hundred years ago.

The new institution was a light shining in comparative darkness, offering to unroll to all comers the ample page of knowledge. It was a beacon to guide the searcher after truth, along the shores of its boundless sea.

NEW ACQUISITIONS



Consumers Green Stamps Book given out at Doug's Gulf Servicerter (Purchase)



Monson Academy – decal; Basketball Schedule 1957; Monson Academy Quarterly for Dec 1969 & Nov 1970; Catalog; application and Student Handbook for 1963-64; and newspaper clippings (Donation from Monson residents)



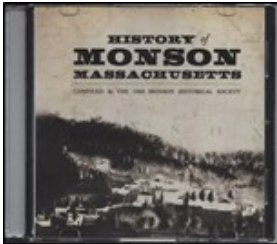
Monson High School Yearbooks from 1949-1977 (Donation from South Carolina resident)

ITEMS FOR SALE

1960 History of Monson Book CD

The History of Monson, written in 1960 for the Bicentennial of the formation of the town, is now available in PDF format on a CD.

If you are currently a member of the Monson Historical Society, the fee to obtain the CD is \$15.00. For non-members, the fee is \$20.00, which includes one year free membership and our quarterly newsletter *The Historian*. Shipping costs for the CD are included in the fee.

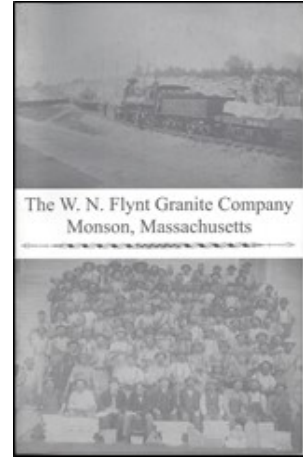


Please include whether you are a member or not and mail your request to:

Monson History CD
 Monson Historical Society, Inc.
 One Green Street, Suite 1
 Monson, MA 01057

Please include your email address to receive the newsletter. Make your checks payable to

Monson Historical Society, Inc.



Also available is the 12-page booklet about the W.N. Flynt Granite Co. Cost is \$3.00 which includes shipping.

WHERE IS THIS?

What was this? Where was it located?
 Whatever became of it?



Email us with your guesses/answers at monsonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

OFFICE FOR RENT

The Monson Historical Society has a vacancy at the Fuller House One Green Street, Monson, MA.

Office for rent—\$450.00 per month

Two rooms, 50 square feet

On street parking

Call Tamara Cabey

(413) 267-5244

For appointment

LAST EDITION'S HISTORICAL QUESTION



What is the connection between Adolf Hitler's Hindenburg and Monson?

The last edition's historical question was: What is the connection between the Hindenburg and Monson? The answer is below as written in the Monson Academy's newspaper, *"The Monson Spirit"*, October 31, 1936.

"Hindenburg" Visits Connecticut Valley

Early in October the "Hindenburg" flew over Monson. The gigantic dirigible was on a tour with various oil company officials and government employees on board. People thought the big German Zeppelin was not going to appear, but finally up through the valley the long silver apparition floated at approximately eighty miles an hour. It passed over the valley eastward bound for Worcester and thence to Boston. The tour had no commercial value but was one entirely of demonstration.

Viewed by Student Body

The morning of the expected flight over Monson Mr. Rogers dismissed the entire student body and told them that the best vantage point in the vicinity of Monson was in the large meadow at the top of Flynt Park. The students and faculty all hiked up to the park and thoroughly enjoyed the respite from the laborious task of studying. The great dirigible did not appear for some time, but nobody minded that at all. Finally it nosed its way into view and sailed majestically through the Monson valley, and the Monson students had seen man's greatest aeronautical achievement.

The event occurred on October 9, 1936. As of yet, no photograph has appeared of this event. If anyone happens to have one, we would be interested in adding it to our archives.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Miriam Pincince, Worcester, MA
Anthony Trojanowski and Kathleen Sheehan, Monson, MA

***** MEMBERSHIP *****

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP: 5/1/2020 (OR A LATER DATE)

Membership Renewals occur on May 1st of each year and are good through April 30th of the following year. (For example, a "5/1/2020" membership means you are a paid member from 5/1/2019 to 4/30/2020).

For Postal Mail Recipients of Newsletter

Check the date on your mailing label. If it reads "**5/1/2020**" (or a later date), your membership is **current**. If it reads "**5/1/2019**" (or an earlier date), it is time for you to renew.

For Email Recipients of Newsletter

Check the "Subject" line in the email. If it reads "**Monson Historical Society Newsletter**", your membership is **current**. If it reads "**Monson Historical Society Newsletter/Renewal**", your membership has expired and you will need to update it. Please read the text in your email for renewal instructions.

NOTE

Please be aware that the newsletters will be sent from this email address: DCDuquette@msn.com (Denis Duquette).

Check your "Junk" email folder, in case it gets sent there.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL INSTRUCTIONS

Please take the time today to complete the membership form and mail it back to the address listed on the form, along with your check.

Your membership will be updated.

MONSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address _____ Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address (for newsletter) _____

(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY!)

Indicate a membership category and enclose a check made out to:
"Monson Historical Society, Inc."

(Note: Membership renewal is May 1st of each year)

_____ Individual \$10⁰⁰ _____ Family \$20⁰⁰

_____ Life Membership \$250⁰⁰

Return to: MHS Membership - One Green Street, Suite One - Monson, MA 01057

Any information you provide us will be kept in strict confidence and will NEVER be given out or sold at any time.

And as always, we **THANK YOU** for your continued support of the Monson Historical Society, Inc.!