
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

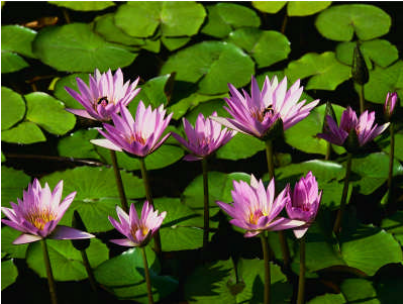
Newsletter

Volume 18 Issue 2

Groton, Vermont 05046

Spring 2005

FRAGRANCES OF SPRINGTIME



Flowers blooming provide memorable aromas in the Spring, but some other odors are best forgotten.. A secret recipe has been found to eliminate the disagreeable after effects of an unwelcome encounter with a skunk.

INSIDE

	Page
Odor control	1
Railroad in Groton	2
All-Class Reunion	3
Grandfather's Tonic	4
Photo review	6
Past Times	10

A non-patentable home remedy for controlling skunk odor was developed by chemist, Paul Krebaum, and reported 10 years ago by the National Animal Damage Control Association:

1 quart 3% hydrogen peroxide

1/4 cup baking soda

1 teaspoon liquid soap

Once the hydrogen peroxide is mixed with the baking soda, the mixture is unstable and generates oxygen, so it cannot be bottled or stored. Apply the fresh mixture on contaminated areas to completely eliminate skunk odor instantly.

OFFICERS

President	Richard Brooks
Vice President	Deane Page
Secretary	Diane Kreis
Treasurer	Joan Haskell
Web Site Editor	James Dresser

MEETING SCHEDULE

(second Tuesday)

March through November

10 AM at the Peter Paul House,
1203 Scott Hwy.

Railroad Transportation in Groton

By Dwight A. Smith

Excerpt from a term paper written by Dwight A. Smith for a geography class at Dartmouth College in 1947 and donated to the Groton Historical Society by him in 1999. Editor

The town of Groton is served by the Barre and Chelsea Railroad. The B & C is a small railroad, with a mainline that is just 37 miles long. The line of the B & C runs from Montpelier, the state capital, to Wells River, Vermont and Woodsville, New Hampshire. The other on-line towns, besides Groton, are South Ryegate, Marshfield and Plainfield.

The B & C operates four trains daily, 2 each way. Each train, besides carrying freight, also carries the mail, express, and passengers. Passenger accommodations are limited to a small portion of an old-time wooden coach that is tacked to the rear of the freight cars. The remainder of the stove-heated car is devoted to the transport of the mail, express, baggage, and the train crew.

All of Groton's mail is carried by the B & C, as well as most of her incoming and outgoing freight. But the people of Groton

don't avail themselves very often of the B & C's passenger service. Private autos and the busses are easier to use, and are faster as well.

Incoming freight to Groton usually consists of carloads of coal, grain, farm machinery, and road oil. Outgoing cars are loaded with lumber, pulpwood, granite monuments, and in November and December, Christmas trees.

The B & C, prior to January 1945 known as the Montpelier and Wells River Railroad, came to Groton in 1873. In recent years there has been no agent at Groton's depot. In 1935 the present "mixed trains" were substituted for the separate freight and passenger trains of former years. The B & C has declined, but the vital transportation link continues to serve Groton well.

Residents of Groton often use the rail facilities of the Boston and Maine at Woodsville, NH, 10 miles distant from Groton. From Woodsville through trains operate to Montreal, Boston, and New York.

GROTON'S ALL-CLASS REUNION

The fourth all-class reunion of the students who attended Groton's village school will be this year on June 25th.

The first reunion sponsored by the Groton Historical Society was on July 6, 1991. That was the year Vermont was celebrating the bicentennial of being the first State to join the Original 13 Colonies in 1791 and each town was asked to celebrate with the theme "Homecoming". The reunion was attended by more than 400 people with the earliest class being 1924, represented by Rufus Hosmer.

A second reunion was held 5 years later in 1996. And the third reunion was held June 24, 2000 with plans to hold them every 5 years. The 2000 reunion was attended by more than 270 people with the earliest class being 1926, represented by Raymond Page.

Visiting with schoolmates is the highlight of each reunion.

NOTICE

Groton High School Alumni Reunion

Date: June 25, 2005

Place: Blue Mt. Union School
Wells River, VT

Time: 12:00 Noon

Price: \$10 per person

Please make checks to:
Groton Historical Society
P. O. Box 89
Groton, VT 05046

Payment must be received before June 15, 2005.

Hope to see you there!

This year's reunion will be held at Blue Mountain Union School in Wells River, VT. Be sure to mail your payment for the meal to reach the Groton Historical Society before June 15, 2005

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY WEB PAGE

<http://homepages.together.net/~jdresser/GrotonHistSoc.html>

GRANDFATHER'S SPRING TONIC

By Waldo F. Glover

Submitted by Deborah Jurist through Jim Dresser. Editor.

"In March, April, and May,
take Blank's Sarsaparilla
100 Doses, One Dollar!
Cures That Tired Feeling!"

"Pooh Fiddlesticks!" Grandfather muttered, and rolled up the newspaper to give his knees a powerful slap as if swatting a fly. It was the afternoon of Town Meeting Day, and Grandfather had been mentally devouring every word of the county newspaper--Republican in politics--which he had picked up at the post office on his way home from town meeting, yes, devouring it down to the bitter stubble of the patent medicine advertisements, and had read that last one aloud to Grandmother.

It was right in line with the subject they had been discussing that very morning, spring tonic--a subject they always discussed on the morning of Town Meeting Day. Of course Grandfather knew nothing of calories, and even less, if that were possible, of vitamins.

If those words, now so common, had been mentioned in his hearing, he might have thought that somebody had discovered new species of wild animals in the Pond Woods. Just the same, he had a stout conviction that in the spring o' the year one should take a spring tonic. As to what

that tonic should be he had ideas all his own, and would take advice from no body, not even Grandmother. To be sure, he shared with her the annual course of sulphur and molasses, of about a week's duration, with all the solemn devotion characteristic of a churchman's observation of Lent.

That accomplished, Grandfather went his way and Grandmother, hers, in as much disagreement as to what a proper spring tonic should be as Jack Sprat and his wife might have been, had they not been a most amiable couple, over the question of the Sunday roast.

Grandfather was a creature of habit. He did thus and so because he "always did," or refused to do thus and so because he "never did." Just when he started to do or not to do, of his own volition, I have not the slightest idea. But on a certain March day--I'll wager it was Town Meeting Day--some sixty-odd years before I made his acquaintance, he brewed himself a tonic of wild cherry bark and hard cider, and every spring thereafter he repeated the process. Not that Grandfather was ignorant of the alleged curative qualities of other spring tonics,

(Continued from page 4)

both home-made and commercial.

Grandmother was wont to pester him with information concerning the potency of her various and sundry concoctions of smartweed, catnip, spearmint, thoroughwort, and a dozen other fragrant herbs which she had cured the previous summer, stored away in paper bags, neatly labeled, and hung in picturesque rows, from attic rafters. And as for patent medicines--well, we've already seen what Grandfather thought of them. It was, as I have said, the afternoon of Town Meeting Day, so Grandfather got into action.

Into the pantry he sprightly tripped and drew out of hiding in a dark corner of a little-used shelf a certain bottle, tall, big-necked, octagonal in shape (or was it hexagonal?) with Gothic-like panels or windows on its several sides. Its capacity must have been at least two quarts, perhaps three.

It was a bottle sacred to Grandfather. No profane hands ever touched it except to dust the shelf. He pulled out the huge stopple and thrust his nose well within the neck to determine if perchance he might detect a suggestion of mustiness lurking far within its spacious depths. Then he hustled over to the kitchen sink, gave the bottle a vigorous rinsing, and placed it on the back of the kitchen table with a touch-it-not thud.

But the Gothic bottle was not the only article sacred to Grandfather in the manufacture of spring tonic;

there was also an ax that nobody else touched, hidden away in the clothes-closet, behind the long tails of Grandfather's Sunday--go-to-meetin' black broadcloth. By this you might get the idea that Grandfather was selfish. He was nothing of the sort, and to prove it let me say that he had another ax which he generously loaned to any Tom, Dick, or Harry to use as he would.

There were times, however, when Grandfather wanted an ax when he wanted it, and he wanted it sharp; and he didn't want to search the whole farm only to be told that a careless hired man had left it in the woods, or, having found it, to discover that somebody had chopped nails with it.

After the frugal supper of samp and milk, with a wedge of pie and a hunk of cheese as a top-off', Grandfather drew from its hiding place the shiny ax and, with a fine whetstone, settled down for half an evening of whetting. With his tongue first in one cheek, then in the other, Grandfather went through many facial distortions before that ax was given a satisfactory hair-splitting edge. Then back it went behind the coattails.

Next morning, if it had been stormy, Grandfather would have stood before the window with a most woe-be-gone expression, preparatory to settling down before the fire with Baxter's Saints' Everlasting Rest, or Pollock's Course of

(Continued on page 8)

SOME GROTON SCENES FROM THE PAST



Trains served Groton from 1873 until the rails were pulled in 1957

(Continued from page 9)

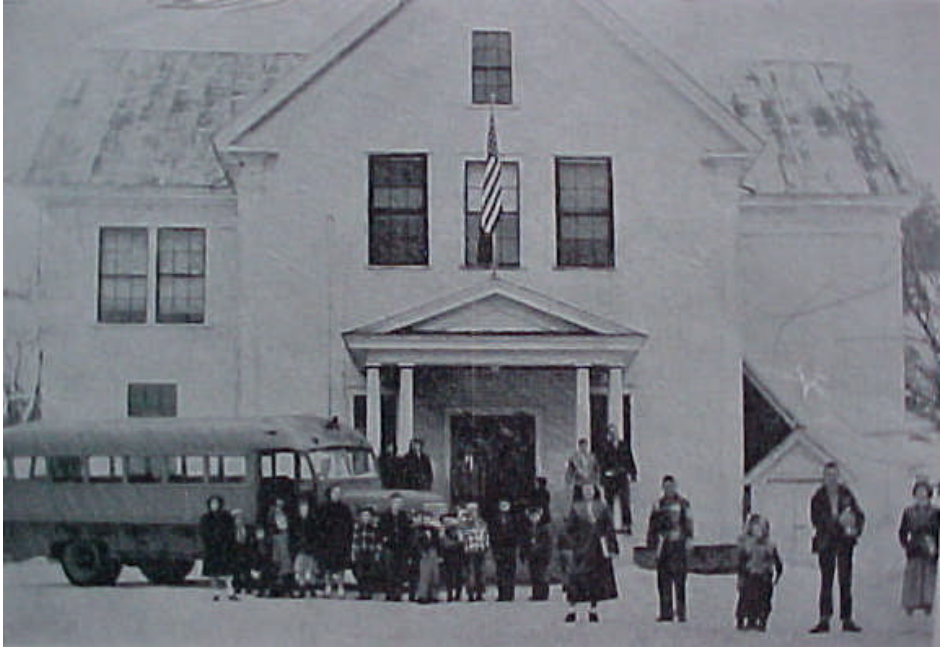
perfect! And down went the rest of the tonic. With a final smack of his lips, and a loud whispered A-a-ah! Grandfather set the glass down with a bang, accompanied by the observation, muttered to himself: "That stuff is wuth more 'n all the Twiddle-Twaddle's Blood Bitters and Piffle's Sarsaparilla in the State of Vermont poured together and b'ile-d down." Then, a little louder, for the benefit of anyone who cared to listen: "Ethan Allen must 'a' took a swig o' that stuff before he took Fort Ticon-deroga." Poor Grandfather! He little knew what sort of stuff Ethan Allen took, or how much the debunkers of history had not yet appeared to tell the world the truth, the whole truth, and, for good measure, more than the truth.

Grandfather's tonic, taken in small doses before each meal, lasted only about a week but that was enough. By the end of

that week his blood was so thinned, and his constitution so fortified that he needed no more tonic for another whole year. Grandfather lived to the ripe old age of eighty-six.

Then, one night in late February, that villain by the name of Pneumonia--Who was it that dubbed him the old man's friend?--picked a fight with him and won.

I've always had a sincere regret that Grandfather, through force of habit, did not make his tonic in February of that last fatal winter. If he had brewed that potion a month earlier than he was wont, I am confident that when his adversary came to grips with him, Grandfather would have broken loose from his clutches, slapped him in the face, and gone on to his hundredth year.



The Groton Village school built in 1867 and known affectionately as the 'tanning factory' provided educational training to students for more than 100 years.

The Westville school was the last rural school in Groton to close. After June 1949 all students were transported to the village school until it also closed and all students were transported to Blue Mountain Union School beginning in September 1970.



(Continued from page 5)

Time.

On the other hand, if it was bright and sunny, (as it was on this particular morning), with snow frozen to a hard, sparkling crust, the saints could have their rest, not Grandfather.

For him there was no second helping of cereal; only one doughnut, please; no more coffee, thank you. In his morning devotions which always came directly after breakfast, he passed over the long, long chapters of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and selected a very short Psalm or praise. In his petitions many noble causes as well as needy individuals were shunted upon a sidetrack until evening.

In an incredibly short time after the "amen," Grandfather was in his warm cardigan, over which he buttoned his blue wool smock. Down over his ears went his black fur cap, around his neck a bison skin collar, on his hands the blue and white striped mittens with which Grandmother always kept him supplied; and from behind the broadcloth coat-tails came the sharp, shiny ax.

It was a crisp morning outside, well below freezing, with the ascending March sun in a cloudless sky giving hope of spring to a countryside long held in the clutches of a long Vermont winter.

From the tip of the tallest basswood, a purple finch was pouring out a continuous volley of his own

interpretation of joy-to-the-world, as Grandfather emerged from the great shed door and walked briskly out through the orchard on the glistening snow crust, a man of eighty with the elastic tread of a boy of eighteen, his breath going out in white puffs on the chilly air, followed by his curious grandson.

"Where you going, Grandpa?"

"Out to the woods," replied Grandfather.

"What for?"

"To cut a cherry tree."

"Why?"

"To make me some medicine."

"You sick, Grandpa?"

"No, and don't want to be."

"Why do you take medicine if you ain't -sick?"

"Jest in case."

"What does medicine do to you if you ain't sick?"

"It's thinning to the blood."

"Is yer blood thick, Grandpa?"

"No, well not exactly, fur's I know--but I don't want it to be."

"What does thick blood do to you, Grandpa?"

"Makes ye feel logy--_sort o' head-achey-like--comes on generally 'bout this time o' year."

"Is my blood thick, Grandpa?"

"Well, no, any rate I reckon it ain't--not at your age. You don't need this kind o' medicine; it would be too strong for yeh. But I can tell yeh what would be good fer yeh--leastwise 't wouldn't do yeh no

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

hurt."

"What's that, Grandpa?"

"Sulphur 'n' m'lasses. I'll tell yer ma to mix yeh up some."

By this time they had reached the clump of wild cherry trees where Grandfather selected the "most likely" one to be sacrificed to the cause of good health. With a few well-directed blows accompanied by as many huffs and puffs, the tree was down and trimmed of its branches. Then Grandfather selected from the long prostrate body the "most likely" three-foot length which he cut out with dispatch; and, with this miniature log under his arm, he turned back towards the farmhouse, followed by his grandson struck dumb by the doleful thought of sulphur 'n' m'lasses.

In a few minutes Grandfather was seated comfortably in his ladder-back rocker, his feet, encased in strong cowhide boots, resting on the hearth of the kitchen range, with a milk pan in his lap, into which he whittled and scraped the green inner bark of the wild cherry.

This done, he rammed the pungent whittlings down the neck of the aforesaid bottle. But the job was then only half done; the best was yet to be. With unabated agility the old man took a lighted candle in one hand and a two-quart pitcher in the other, and clumped down, down, down the cellar stairs, to the cider barrel.

That cider barrel! That, too,

was sacred to Grandfather. Sure enough, everybody else had drunk their fill of sweet cider during the few days while it was "settling" in the shed, just after it had been brought in from the cider mill. Moreover, Grandmother had appropriated several quarts which she boiled over the fireplace, in the big brass kettle, as an essential ingredient of that delicacy known locally as b'iled-cider-applesass.

But after the cider had "worked," and the clear liquid had been drawn off and poured into the barrel in the cellar, no one touched it but Grandfather, and he not to drink it, but only to "improve" it. This he did by putting in two or three quarts of black cherries--rum cherries, he called them--which he had gathered with his own hands. After this, he dropped in several bunches of raisins in a most prodigal manner. Then he drove in the bung and adjured Father Time to do his stuff; and neither Grandfather nor anybody else touched it from that October hour until the day after Town Meeting when Grandfather filled his bottle of cherry bark with cider, added two lumps of maple sugar, and set the concoction away with his blessing.

In exactly one week, true to schedule, Grandfather took a small tumbler and poured out about half a gill, and held it up at arm's length against the window to observe its amber glow. Then he took a wee sip to try it out, smacking his lips and rolling his eyes. Yes, it was

(Continued on page 6)

PAST TIMES

In the good old days before the electronic age, home entertainment was provided by memorizing stories and reciting them for the enjoyment of the family. One such story that my Mother and her sisters learned when they were small and still enjoyed telling it when they were well into their nineties is the story of the Brindle Cow. The words probably differed a little with each telling, but the story was the same and this is the way I remember hearing it.

The Brindle Cow

Twas the break of day on the summer's morn
and the warm south wind rustled the corn.
The birds were singing their joyful lay
to meet the dawn of a coming day.
When the drowsy youth with a languor air
Slowly descended the attic stairs.
He took down his old straw hat from the nail
and over his arm hung the milking pail.
And he followed the lane with a sluggish tread
to the pasture lot where the cattle fed.
His three legged stool from the pasture fence
he took and leisurely wandered thence.
And settled himself to business now
on the starboard side of the brindle cow.
The lacteal fluid so rich and sweet
Nearly filled the pail at his feet.
When the old cow switched her tail at a fly
and hit the youngster plump in the eye.
So dot ratchet look at you now
gosh darn, such a gosh darn cow.
Try that over you darn old fool
and I'll bust your bibbs with the milking stool.
But before he could get in a lick, he felt
a concussion below the belt.

A fleeting glimpse of bindle's heels.
A sigh, a groan, a pain, a reel
and down up on the dewy grass
in one conglomerate mass
went youth, and stool, and milk, and pail.
While brindle with erected tail
went snorting o'er the pasture wide
nor halted short till the other side.
The morning waned, the sun grew hot.
The youth with his pail of milk came not.
The old folks wondered and uneasy grew
and down to the pasture lot they flew.
And there they found him where he fell,
with scarcely enough life to tell
scared and trembling the old folks how
that darn infernal brindle cow
has given him a fearful bout
and nearly kicked his liver out.
And never, from that day to now
has he ventured near the brindle cow.
Who switches her tail as blyth as when
she kicked the youth in the abdomen.

Here is another little ditty that might bring back memories to some of the old timers. Harold Puffer recalls his father reciting this one.

Remember When

Remember when you were a wee-wee tot
they took you from a warm-warm cot
and sat you on a cold-cold pot
and told you to go if you could or not?



Home of the Groton Historical Society built in 1840
Purchased in 1989 and renovated by the Society
for storing and displaying Historical records and artifacts

Groton Historical Society Newsletter
J. W. Benzie, Editor
P. O. Box 89
Groton, VT 05046-0089

