



ANNUAL MEETING

Officers will be elected at 2:45 pm.

Old Time Community Photos



**Explore our new website
and identify “mystery photos”**

**Sunday
November 6, 2016**

3:00 pm EST

Free Public Program & Discussion
at

Townshend Town Hall

Refreshments Served



Deconstructing the Townshend RR Depot

Townshend Railroad Depot Leaves Town

Since 1880 the Townshend railroad depot has been a part of town long after the demise in 1936 of the railroad that served the West River valley. The small one room building and loading dock was located on Depot Road in Harmonyville next to the stationmaster's home, now the residence of Charlotte Clayton.

The depot was a busy place during the years of operation of the railroad, serving passengers and loading mail and freight to be sent south to Brattleboro and north to Londonderry. It was also a source of town entertainment. Victor Morse (author of *36 Miles of Trouble*) tells us that a “popular summer evening diversion was to go to the station to watch the trains come. This practice continued almost to the last days...at Newfane, Townshend, and Jamaica [where] there were often a hundred or more on hand.”

Because of erratic arrival times, local families nearby would time their departure for the depot by waiting for a glimpse through the trees of the tall ball on the engine as the train approached the station. Others would wait for residents of Depot Road to alert them that the train had arrived. The system did not always work, causing frustration and irate letters in the newspaper on the part of those who had planned to meet the train.

Bought by Raymond and Charlotte Clayton in 1952, the depot building was used for storage and as an antique building. In May of 2016 the small building was dismantled and moved by new owners to a location in Newfane to begin life as a residence. A unique part of Townshend history no longer exists.

--Marge Holt



Train arriving at Townshend Station c 1910

Those Jones Boys!

Part III of a series on Maple Hill Farm

The series opens with Charles and Kathrina Jones running a farm and summer boarding house on Windham Hill Road with their two young sons, Perley (born 1899) and Robbie (born 1901).

In early 1900's in rural Vermont, getting from one place to another was accomplished on foot or by horse-drawn vehicles. Many a farm boy had his first solo driving experience by the age of seven or eight behind the reins of a one or two horse hay wagon, while bigger boys and men were pitching hay onto the wagon. The less demanding task of driving a sleigh buggy or carriage became almost as normal as walking for the average young country boy. That ability was especially important for the boys of Maple Hill, since all summer long they had guests to drive various places.

Taking care of their guests is something the whole Jones family did every year from June to September. My grandparents were able to make their farm self-supporting in spite of a small

family and no big cash crop, just by being at the right place at the right time. They were among the first in the area to open their house to summer boarders. Visitors came from all over New England, New York, and New Jersey; they often stayed all summer and were very likely to come year after year. Not long after the West River Railroad opened up the valley in the late 1880's, the Jones family began advertising for guests. I don't know what they said in earlier ads, but here is one from the 1912 *Call of the Country*, a magazine put out by the West River Valley Association:

Maple Hill Farm. Will accommodate 15 to 25 people. Chas. Jones, Prop. PO Address, West Townshend, Vt. Situated in the town of Windham, on stage road. Large two-story brick house with double piazza; nice lawn shaded with maple trees; lawn tennis and croquet grounds; fine spring water; two miles from station, guests are met at station and conveyed to house free. Good hunting on farm, and trout fishing. Deer hunting in season and guide furnished. Tents furnished for those who wish to sleep out. Telephone. Rate per day, \$1.00 to \$1.50; per week \$7.00 to \$8.00. Open June 1.



Ten-year-old Robert Jones at reins with a young guest.

The deer-hunting guide referred to would have been one or both of the two young Jones boys. Perley and Robbie were very much at home in the woods and were hunting deer and trapping critters before they were ten. My dad's first

successful trapping venture warranted both a postcard and a short item in the newspaper. Apparently the guns are there for show:



Perley seated, Robbie standing. The postcard is labeled, "A Lynx --Robbie's First Catch."

--Priscilla Jones Mounts



Dennison House and Barn: A Townshend Treasure

The Dennison house of 154 Grafton Road (next to the pharmacy) was at one time owned by Dr. Carlos G. and Ruth Otis. This house, built c 1850, is a vernacular example of the Greek Revival style that was prevalent in southern Vermont towns from 1820-1860. The typical hallmarks of this truly American architectural style are evident in the classical symmetry of window placement, the center doorway with sidelights, the front porch and the pilasters on the corners. This front-gabled house is on a 0.30 acre lot with a small back building and a 720-square-foot red barn.

The weathered red Yankee barn (c 1820's) has vertical board siding that was usual for this period of construction. Typically, town dwellers had a barn for their animals: a horse for transportation, a family cow for milk and chickens for eggs and meat. A vegetable and herb garden would have also been maintained to help feed the family in order to avoid the price of provisions at the general store.

It appears that Dr. Otis acquired the property in 1964 for back taxes and gave life tenancy to Mrs. Fannie Dennison, widow of Rev. Ruel Dennison, pastor of the Baptist Church. The Dennison's son Ruel was considered "different" by the other children in town but was a gentle soul who had the knack of singing bird calls to perfection. In today's world Ruel would likely be termed "autistic," and after his mother died he was sent to an institution. *(continued on next page)*



2016 History Expo in Tunbridge, Charles Marchant installs exhibit.

Townshend Historical Society Board

President: Robert DuGrenier
 Vice President: Charles Marchant
 Secretary: Marge Holt
 Treasurer: Walter Corcoran

Trustees: Heidi Clawson, Priscilla Lyman, Lee Petty

The original kitchen sink still had a hand pump in the 1960's; there were no kitchen cupboards, and the hot air from the first floor went up to the second floor through ceiling vents. The barn was well known to have held a treasure, Dr. Otis' 1930 Packard Phaeton. The small back house room to the barn was the privy. Eventually when Grace Cottage Hospital needed more septic coverage due to its expanding needs, Dr. Otis in 1973 sold property in the back of their house for this purpose.

A trunk that was found in the house was donated by the Otis family to the Townshend Historical Society. Inside, the label reads:

***George E. Cooley of East Townshend
Manufacturer of Harnesses, Trunks, Valises,
Ladies Bonnet Boxes, Satchels, Carpet Bags,
Whips, Horsenets, Sleigh Bells and, etc.***

Town records show that Cooley owned a 1/4 share of a house and also a shop in this area. George Cooley was married to Sarah Smith on January 27, 1850, and after her husband died in 1855, Sarah Cooley married Royal Sanderson who is shown as owner of this house on the 1869 Beers map.

In conclusion, this lovely Greek Revival house is a pleasant addition to the charming streetscape for all who drive or walk down this side of Grafton Road. This dwelling has housed many a family over the years and many a treasure for the hospital fair. The Otis daughters were happy to convey the house to Grace Cottage Hospital and hope it will continue to be a welcome and useful addition to Otis Health Care Center. Chris Cole who furnished the Conditions Assessment of Dennison House for the hospital in December 2015 further adds, "these buildings and site retain significant architectural and historic character, and with proper preservation and maintenance will continue to contribute to the historic character of Townshend."

--Lise G. Moran, Architectural Historian



P.O. Box 202, Townshend, VT 05353



Dennison Barn built c 1820's

Please join us as a Member for 2017!

Our 2017 membership year begins January 1st. Please return the enclosed member envelope with your dues. Including your email address will help us keep in touch and lower our postage expenses.

Gifts of Membership are now available. Order them when you join or renew your membership.