
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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Summer 2018

400 YEAR CELEBRATION IN 2020



Post card of *Mayflower* in Plymouth Harbor

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Plans are being made for a 400 year celebration in 2020 of the *Mayflower* voyage that brought the Pilgrims to America in 1620. The *Mayflower* first anchored in the New World on November 11, 1620 at the northern edge of Cape Cod, in what is now Provincetown Harbor. On that same day 41 male passengers drafted and signed the Mayflower Compact establishing the rule of law for the new land. The Pilgrims spent the next five weeks exploring Cape Cod before sailing to Plymouth, where they arrived December 16, 1620 and founded Plymouth Colony.

On February 12, 1609, about 100 English religious refugees were granted permission to settle in Leiden, Netherlands. Because the Pilgrim congregation was not recognized as a

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denomination, the group was not allowed to establish its own church. They held their own meetings on Sundays and Thursdays at John Robinson's home, known locally as "English Gate", and listened to his sermons.

Most of the Pilgrims had previously made their living from small-scale agriculture in England, but in Leiden they easily found employment in the city's labor intensive textile industry. Children eight years and older were employed. The work performed in small cottages, included tasks such as wool scouring, sorting, spinning, and weaving. Economically many laborers lived on the edge of subsistence. The demand for workers was so great that it attracted migrant workers from many countries. Pilgrims had little trouble integrating into this multicultural society and, as time passed, their leaders feared the group would lose its religious and cultural identity.

A private colony where the community could retreat and sustain their pure faith became increasingly important. Moreover the Pilgrims liked the idea of leaving the arduous textile industry to build new lives cultivating lands in the wilderness of North America. They hired the ship *Speedwell* to take them to England to meet the *Mayflower* and sail together to Northern Virginia in America.

The *Mayflower* left London in July 1620 for Southampton where they loaded food and supplies for the voyage. The *Speedwell* was leaking on the trip from the Netherlands to England so the voyage was delayed a week for repairs. On August 5, the two ships set sail for America, but the *Speedwell* started leaking again and they stopped in Dartmouth for more repairs, arriving on August 12. After the leaks were patched the two ships set sail

again for America. After they had sailed about 300 miles out to sea, the *Speedwell* started leaking again. Frustrated with the loss of time and their inability to make the ship seaworthy, they returned to Plymouth, England and decided the *Mayflower* would go to America alone. The cargo was transferred to the *Mayflower* and some of the passengers were so tired and disappointed with the problems that they left and went home. The rest went aboard the already crowded *Mayflower* and with 102 passengers and crew left Plymouth, England on September 6. The voyage took 66 days until they sighted land on Cape Cod on the morning of November 9, 1620.

The first half of the trip was normal with the only major problem sea-sickness, but by October several Atlantic storms made the voyage treacherous. They intended to land in Northern Virginia (near the mouth of the Hudson River), but the storms blew them further north and they anchored in Provincetown Harbor on Cape Cod. They spent several weeks exploring the Cape for a suitable place to build their Plantation. On December 25, 1620 they started construction of the first buildings at Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts.

The General Society of Mayflower Descendants (GSMD) estimates there are 35 million descendants of the 50 passengers and crew that survived and have documented descendants..

The indigenous people of the Wampanoag Nation who occupied the land when the Pilgrims landed are also being recognized in the celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the *Mayflower* landing with a traveling exhibit called “*Our*” *Story* which will be hosted by participating organizations over the next two years.

Vermont Historical Society News

Vermonters are among the most talkative and courteous conversationalists in the country. They also curse the most and talk the fastest. A speech pattern study conducted by the Marchex Institute used artificial intelligence, including machine learning and natural language processing algorithms, to analyze more than 6.8 million calls placed by consumers throughout the country to a variety of businesses.

Why people stay in Vermont is the subject of a recent article by geographers Cheryl Morse and Jill Mudgett. Drawing from an extensive survey they look at why “contented Vermonters” stay in the state. The researchers find that landscape, family ties and a sense of community are some of the “emotional dimensions” of choosing to stay. There are also diverse forms of mobility that contented stayers take advantage of that keeps them happy staying here.

The authors of a new study have highlighted the detrimental impacts that rising temperatures will have on the state’s forests. With mean annual temperatures projected to increase between 3 and 8°F by 2100, Vermont’s forests—which cover 78 percent of the land—face severe threats. Because 80 percent of forestland is privately owned, the report encourages land managers to remove invasive species and preserve species diversity.

Vermont’s maple syrup production continues to grow, tripling in the past decade, from an average of 600,000 gallons per year to about 1.98 million per year now. Vermont ranks first overall in national maple syrup production, surpassing second-ranked Maine by more than 1 million gallons per year.

A new article in Vermont History highlights the important role that French speaking immigrants from Quebec played in Vermont and New England. Scholar Leslie Choquette documents the immigration patterns between 1840 and 1930 of tens of thousands of immigrants. This story was featured recently on Brave Little State and was the subject of an international conference last year at UVM.

In the wake of a former student’s threat to open fire in a Vermont high school, the state has commissioned a study to scrutinize schools’ safety procedures. Although 96 percent of schools participate in the re-

quired safety drills, the study also found that 70 percent do not have the ability to lock all doors from the inside. Half of the schools lack a public address system to alert people outside the building—and half don't require faculty and staff to wear identification during the school day.

This year's Vermont History Day Junior Historical Paper 1st place winner *The Green Mountain Parkway* by Katie Kelley dives into the 1930s' proposed highway project. The project divided the state, some opposed because it would ruin the landscape, others supported it to bring new jobs to the state. Lauren Rayson, a graduating economics major, won the Andrew E. Nuquist top paper award from the Center for Research on Vermont for the paper *Understanding and Mitigating the Effects of the Childcare Cliff: A Case Study of Vermont*. And the Center's George Bryan award went to Lachlan Francis for a paper titled *Political Polarization Along the Rural-Urban Divide*. Lachlan is a graduating Geography Major from Putney, Vermont.

Red Scare in the Green Mountains by Rick Winston examines the impact of the McCarthy era on Vermont and its leaders. The book gives readers a thrilling and well-written ride through some troubling times, documenting Vermonters who gave into prejudice and bias and those courageous enough to stand up to Joe McCarthy and his minions in the state. Vermont and UVM do not always come off in the best light. And speaking of "scares" -- Yvonne Daley's *Going Up the Country: When the Hippies, Dreamers, Freaks, and Radicals Moved to Vermont* tells the story of how newcomers to Vermont in the 1970s roiled the locals causing fear and panic that the state was being invaded by hippies and radicals. A rollicking good read about a fascinating period in Vermont's past.

Another new exhibit at the Vermont Historical society at the History Center in Barre celebrates the early days of auto racing in Vermont, and includes old racing treasures and memorabilia such as trophies, models, car parts, fire suits, flags, photographs... and more.

GROWING UP IN GROTON RAILROAD STREET IN THE 1930'S

John Willard Benzie

Railroad Street starts at the junction with the Topsham Road (now Powder Spring Road) on the south side of the Montpelier and Wells River Railroad tracks and goes east towards Whitcher Mountain for about two thirds of a mile. Carroll (1892-1968) and Addie (1887-1964) Ricker lived at the junction, and their home faced west on the Topsham Road. Carroll was the undertaker in town and a storekeeper, the “son” in E. D. Ricker & Son IGA grocery store, located on Main Street. One summer in the late-thirties when my parents were away to a Rural Letter Carriers Convention, I stayed with Lewis (1888-1968) and Margaret (1900-1977) French family who lived in the apartment over the IGA store at that time. My siblings stayed with our Aunt in East Calais but I stayed in Groton so I wouldn't miss playing my clarinet in McLure's Student Band concerts and events. The Ricker Children were Edmund (1915-1990) and Katherine (1929-2017)

The first dwelling on the south side of Railroad Street was Wilbur (1876-1950) and Lilla (1881-1963) Carbee. Wilbur was a stonecutter and dealer in monuments. His business was in one of the stonesheds on the north side of the tracks and east of the two grain stores. They had only one child, Florence (1908-?) who married Crawford (1905-1975) Adams. The Adams family lived in an apartment in the south end of the building and they had three children: Kay, Garnet and Wilbur.

Next house east on the south side of Railroad Street was Ralph (1892-1953) and Jessie (1894-1987) Foster. Ralph worked at the For-All Feed Store on the north side of the tracks between the Railroad Station and the Park & Pollard feed store. Their children were Dot, Jean, Martha and Judy.

Jim (1870-1943) and Jane (1871-1956) Smith, parents of Jessie (Smith) Foster, were next. Jim ran a livery stable and my Dad rented horses from him to deliver mail in the teen years. Dad said that Jim Smith was a “good vet” and knew how to take care of a sick horse. In addition to Jessie, they had two boys: Ralph Smith, and Bernard Eastman Smith, who were no longer living at home. I never saw either of the boys.

“Lo” Welch (1846-1941) and his daughter, Reta McAllister (1893-1977) and her son, Loren (1917-1970) lived in the next house going east on the south side of Railroad Street. “Lo” was a retired shoe cobbler and harness maker. We liked to play with the equipment in his abandoned shop. Reta was widowed in 1919. She and her son kept chickens and sold eggs. Bill Foley, who lived in the third house on the north side of Railroad

Street, also became a widower in 1919 and sometime later he sold his house and boarded with Reta and her father. They expanded the chicken farm and were married in 1961.

My grandparents, John "Jack" (1856-1930) and Mary (1858-1941) Benzie lived in the last house on the south side of Railroad Street. Soon after my Grandfather died in 1930 my Grandmother came and lived with us, and she rented her house. The first tenants I remember were James and Dot Murray and their children: Sonny, Alice, and Ron about the same age as me and my siblings. James was a granite cutter from Scotland who moved to Groton from Barre to work at the stonesheds. Later in the thirties the Murray's moved and Maurice (1907-1990) and Florence (1913-1980) Cross lived there with their children: Junior and Bobby. Maurice worked at one of the feed stores. When the Cross family moved to Danville, Lewis and Margaret French lived here with their children: Lucille, Barbara and Greta.

Orange (1869-1942) and Ella (1871-1960) Morrison lived in the first house on the north side of Railroad Street opposite the Lo Welch home. Orange had a small farm with 5 or 6 cows, some pigs, a pair of horses and a two story hen house. I tarred the roof on the henhouse one year for his widow. They had no children. Orange separated the cream and Ella churned it into butter for sale to the local merchants. In addition to milk and butter their main source of income was from the eggs and chickens.

We lived in the second house on the north side of Railroad Street opposite my Grandparents home, on a one acre lot in Orange Morrison's field where my Aunt Cora (1895-1979) and her husband, Warren Carpenter (1879-1938) built the house in the early twenties that we later lived in. My father, Jim Benzie (1893-1975) was a rural mail carrier for 50 years from 1913-1963. My mother, Helen (Peck) Benzie (1906-2000) was a school teacher. She taught in West Groton for two years before they were married in 1927, and returned to teaching during WWII when there was a shortage of teachers and married women were allowed to take employment outside the home.

Houses were not numbered at that time, but my Mother, wanted an address for our house, so she figured there were five houses on Railroad Street before ours and called our address 6 Railroad Street. She even bought a house number sign "6" and had Dad attach it to the front door. The five houses before ours were: Wilbur Carbee; Ralph Foster; Jim Smith; Lo Welch and Orange Morrison.

The next house on the north side of Railroad Street was Bill Foley's (1888-1966). Bill was a mechanic and worked for Sewell Page (1897-1934) at the Square Front Garage manufacturing Page Chains.

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RAILROAD STREET

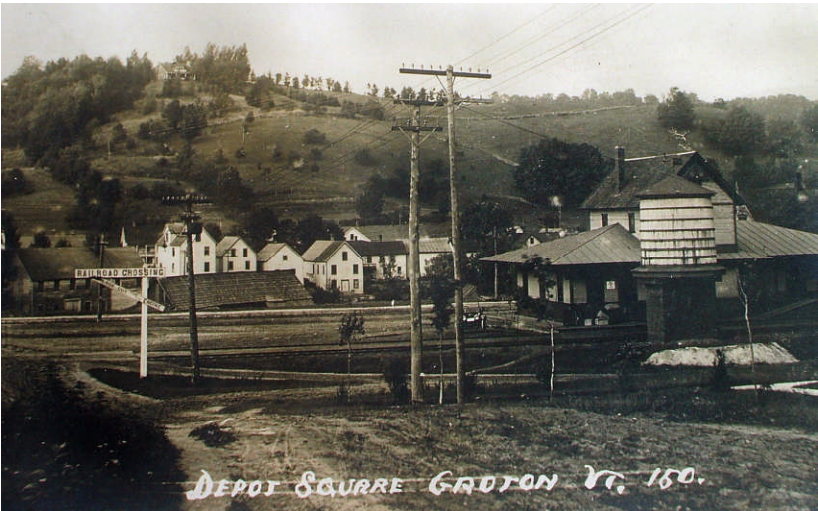


Orange Morrison's farm on North side of Railroad Street



1932 Benzie Family

Willard, Charlotte, father (James), Marilyn, mother (Helen), Melvin, Ina



Railroad Street junction with Topsham Road on South side of tracks



1939
Willard
Buddenae Smith
Charlotte
Ed Potter
Janet
Jean Smith
Bobby Murray
Ina
James Murray
Melvin
Alice Murray

1939 Benzie, Murray, and Smith children on RR Street with Benzie's cousin Ed Potter from Quincy, MA

HEMAN AGUSTUS WELCH 1877-1951

Carol Welch Shields

My Great Uncle Heman Augustus Welch was born in Groton, Vermont May 24, 1877, the third child of Lebbeus and Martha Page Welch, Lebbeus' third wife.

Great Grandpa Lebbeus' first two marriages were short-lived. We have no date for the wedding to his first love, Sarah, daughter of Hannah Seavey and Moses Page, Jr. We only know he was twenty nine and Sarah not quite sixteen when little Hannah was born April 12, 1861. Three years later, January 10, 1864 Etta G. would join the happy family. Barely a year later Lebbeus would be a widower and his two little girls, Hannah, four and Etta, one year, would be motherless.

Hulda Welch, Lebbeus' cousin, born December 24, 1828 would be his second love. This union would produce no new children. When Hulda died eight years later, Hannah, now twelve and Etta, nine keenly felt this second loss as did Lebbeus and her parents, Forrest and Hulda (Paul) Welch.

One can only imagine the joy of those girls to learn their Father was remarrying, this time to their beloved Aunt Martha, Sarah's twenty year old sister born June 7, 1854. I'm sure it was not only love for that dear brother-in-law but deep affection for those little nieces that played a part in Martha's decision.

Lebbeus and Martha were to have seven children and forty-three years together. Jacob Hooper, my grandfather, was born Sept 25, 1874; Sarah Bell February 2, 1876; Heman Augustus May 24, 1877; Martha Blanche May 19, 1881; Sarah Page July 21, 1884; Edward Augustus September 2, 1886 and baby Frankie 1891. Sadly, both girls and little Frankie died in infancy.

While Martha so grieved the loss of those three babies, the girls both named for her sister Sarah, it is evidenced she loved and cherished those nieces, now step-daughters, as her own. My Grandfather Jacob would end up naming his only daughter Etta for his much loved step sister. Hannah, who likewise doted on him in infancy would leave home, marrying at thirteen before Jacob was barely walking.

My Great Grandfather Lebbeus was eighty-five when his Martha died in 1917.

Great Uncle Heman, “Hem”, (pronounced with a long “e”) as we always knew him, claimed Flora, daughter of Almon and Mary Page Mason, as his bride. I could find no birth or death dates for Flora. They had one child, Alice May born February 20, 1911. Alice married C. Ray Welch, born January 23, 1897, son of John Henry and Laura Bell Page Welch. They were cousins, he, fourteen years older. On January 23, 1950 just short of her thirty ninth birthday Alice died. The couple had no children thus ending Heman and Flora’s family tree.

My Uncle Hem was a craftsman held in high regard by both of my parents. He was sixty-six by the time I was born, widowed, yet I recall him well and our home boasted of his handiwork. Most cherished still is the handcrafted bobsled he fashioned for Dad, every round hand whittled and well sanded, every wooden rod, evenly spaced that formed the long bed. Shorter uniform rounds descended to the smooth runners on either side, giving the sled an elevation of 24 inches. We, as children would speculate on how he had managed to curve those wooden runners at the front “that much” without the wood breaking and the same discussion was prompted as we studied how the pieces that made up the long handle splayed near the top to give added strength to the sturdy hand grip. Our brother Skip (Clarence, Jr.), who lives in South Carolina, still has the sled, finding it not only a treasured heirloom but a conversation piece in that town of little snowfall.

Uncle Hem never forgot my Mother in all his projects. How much his acceptance meant to her. He came one day with a large breadboard he’d fashioned for her, edged with a two inch lip on three sides to “keep the flour from spilling off the board.” Another treasured gift was a long handled metal dustpan that would automatically flip up whenever she lifted it causing all the dirt to fall back into the cone shaped base saving her the back breaking job of bending over to hold a dustpan every time she swept our floors. How she lamented its loss when the repeated action finally wore out the holes where the handle attached to the base. I, later in life, wondered why Dad had not just reinforced those holes with washers and a dab of solder. If he had done so, it might have lasted a lifetime.

The sturdy kitchen stool was another of his creations, its hand

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whittled rounds mortised into four thick legs that gave both strength and stability, the top sporting a circular double layer of thick lumber. It was a work of art. It was still in our Bible hill home when I left home at seventeen.

The last of his life Uncle Hem boarded with Carlyle Dunn in East Ryegate, just down the hill from his niece Etta and Bob White's farm. Dad would often go to visit leaving us in the car. We were all aware that our Great Uncle was not well. Always we waited quietly, hoping just to get a glimpse of him as Dad entered and exited.

Burned into my memory is my last look at Uncle Hem lying in his casket at Rickers Funeral Home in Groton. We had no phone: I think it was Aunt Etta and Uncle Bob who came over to share the sad news with Dad that Hem had "gone in his sleep." Apparently Uncle Hem died without means. There was no funeral service, only visiting hours. No one but Carroll Rickers was there when we entered the big white building on Main Street. He opened the door, silently ushered us in, with a gesture beckoned us to approach the casket, then with a gentle pat on Dad's shoulder, disappeared. Admonished ahead of time to be quiet we silently circled the casket that sat central.

No one spoke a word for the duration, as we gazed for the last time at that kindly peaceful face propped up on the white taffeta pillow, his head and shoulders surrounded by more of the same. Truly the silence was deafening; time did seem to stand still. I looked up just in time to see my Dad, chin trembling, making no attempt to stay the tear that trickled unbidden down his cheek. After what seems like a long time we retraced our steps outside. We rode home in silence, unusual for seven of us in the back of the old Model A.

It was again through Aunt Etta we heard that Uncle Hem was buried in an unmarked grave "on the Town" somewhere in the back of the Groton Village Cemetery; she didn't know just where. It wasn't till Dad in his old age sold our Bible Hill home and moved to Groton was he able to locate the gravesite, now having the means to ask Rufus Hosmer to set a gravestone there. It bore simply that much loved name "Heman Augustus

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Welch.” As Dad explained, “So he wouldn’t be forgotten.” That, he would never be in our family! I have one photo of him, a handsome man in his twenties with his siblings and his parents Lebbeus and Martha all standing out in front of a home, not their own. Theirs, a plank one with a front porch on the hill overlooking Levi Pond, was still standing in 1975. Dad, armed with his trusty Polaroid captured it, and Aunt Etta and Margaret Hooper Carter, their cousin, on a outing there.

Treasured too are the photos I have of my Grandfather Jacob Hooper Welch. Every time I scan those photos of Grandpa Jake in his old age, I flashback to my Great Uncle Hem; the resemblance is uncanny.

The End

(Continued from page 7) **RAILROAD STREET**

Bill was widowed and lived there with his son Donald (1914-1983). I remember watching his barn burn in the early thirties. Soon after that he sold the property to Gerald Morse (1909-1998) and his wife, Hazel (1910-1999) who lived there a few years until they moved to the Welch place just west of the village cemetery. Then Ray (1899-?) and Ida (1899-1993) Taylor lived here with their children: Ruth, Huck, Dude, and Harmie. Ray was a cattle dealer and had a meat market in South Ryegate. He built a slaughter house at the north end of the property where he butchered animals for fresh meat. After the Taylor family moved to East Montpelier sometime in the thirties Gerald (1894-1959) and Gladys (1904-1995) Smith lived here with their children: Buster, Junior, Grover, Buddenae, and Jean. Later the Smith’s moved to the house where Carroll Ricker lived at the junction of Railroad Street and the Topsham Road where they had their last child, Ralph. Carroll Ricker and his family had moved to the Ellsworth Darling (1874-1947) house next door to E. D. Ricker and Son IGA Store on Main Street. Gerald worked at one of the Feed Stores and later managed the IGA Store with his wife for a while before opening Smith’s Snack Bar in the building next to George Carpenter’s Shell Filling Station on Main Street. After the Smith’s moved from the Bill Foley house, Claude Hutchins (1904-1987) and Pearl Bouley (1893-1952) with their children: George, Betty and Berne lived here. Claude operated a Garage for repairing vehicles in South Ryegate.

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(Continued from page 13) **RAILROAD STREET**

Continuing east Railroad Street crossed Edward's brook (Keenan Brook) on a wooden bridge. We called it "Edwards brook" because it went through Harley Edwards's meadow south of the bridge. At a sharp turn a short distance from the bridge, and upstream from where the sewage from houses on Railroad Street entered the brook, it was wider and deeper, possibly four feet, where we went swimming as small children. When we were older "Big Rock" on the Wells River or the Quarry hole on the Topsham road were the swimming places.

The brook flowed north dividing Bill Foley's and Captain Smith's properties on the north side of Railroad Street. When I was in High School, I raised a small herd of goats for an Agriculture Class project and rented about three acres from Captain Smith between the brook and their driveway to pasture the goats. The goats did a pretty good job of clearing brush from the pasture.

A long driveway on the North side of Railroad Street and several rods east of the bridge led to Captain Dwight (1889-1962) and Trixie (1897-1960) Smith's summer home, *Snug Harbor*. During the summers Trixie and their children, Bea and Buddy lived here and Captain Smith visited when he was not at sea. Captain Smith was captain of a merchant ship that was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine in WWII. His story of survival in a life boat for 10 days with his crew was in the first three issues of the GHS newsletter in 2011.

Railroad Street ended just over the rise in Harley (1890-1973) and Orphie (1897-1979) Edwards's dooryard. This was the largest farm on Railroad Street. After Orange Morrison stopped selling milk, we got it from Harley Edwards for several years before we had a cow of our own. In addition to farming, Harley was a skilled blacksmith and built or repaired a lot of equipment for people in town. Their children are Thelma, Lyle, Ruby and Leslie.

At the junction of Captain Smith's driveway and Railroad Street an old trail went south through Edwards' pasture to some abandoned and dilapidated buildings called "The Mandigo Place" where we used to go in the spring and catch pollywogs in a small frog pond. At Christmas time Mr. Edwards gave us permission to cut a Christmas tree in the wooded area around the Mandigo Place. I have never discovered how this place got its name and often wondered who the people were that lived here.

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Visit GHS on the internet

Email: grotonvthistory@gmail.com

Web page: grotonvthistory.org

Facebook@[grotonvthistory](https://www.facebook.com/grotonvthistory)

Society meeting on May 1, 2018 at the Peter Paul House discussed activities and programs for this year. The agenda included key access for volunteers, sponsoring a concert this summer, another road rally in the fall, highlighting the Railroad in Groton 1873-1950, publishing a book on Mr. Glover's Childhood, coordinating with the Nature Center at Groton State Forest, having a table at the Groton Home Show, indexing the newsletters, need for a local member to keep up Family Records database, and a maintenance program for the Peter Paul House. Treasurer reported operating fund balance is \$3,591.38

Plans are underway for the tri-annual reunion of Groton School students in 2019. If you know of any address changes or people who were missed in the past please notify Lois Boemig at 1331wb78@yahoo.com or GHS at grotonvthistory@gmail.com

David Bailey, a descendant of Israel Bailey, contacted the Society with corrected and updated information on his branch of the Bailey family. Israel was one of the first settlers in Groton and is listed in the 1790 census. His family history is posted on the GHS website.

GHS member Kathleen Jensen, a descendant of Edmund Morse, sent information on her branch of the Morse family. Edmund was one of the first settlers in Groton and is listed in the 1790 census. His family history is posted on the GHS website.

GHS member Chuck Pollard, a descendant of Edward Pollard, also sent additions and corrections for the Pollard family. Edward Pollard was in the 1800 Groton census and his family history will be posted on the website in the near future.

Corrections and updates on the families in the 1790 census will soon be posted on the GHS website. David Bailey lives in Canada, Kathleen Jensen lives in Washington and Chuck Pollard lives in California. The Society is grateful to those who send corrections and updates for the Groton Family Histories so our family records will be as complete and accurate as possible.

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