



# hilltopper

Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 8 **1909 BUILDING RESTORATION ISSUE** August 2009

## 1909 Tourtellotte Memorial High School Building Receives Historic Preservation Approval

On August 5, 2009, the State of Connecticut Historic Preservation Council voted unanimously to add the 1909 Tourtellotte Memorial High School building to the State Historic Register.

According to their site, the Historic Preservation Council, a part of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, functions under state and federal law as Connecticut's State Historic Preservation Office. The division administers the State Register of Historic Places as well as federally funded National Register-based programs designed to identify, register, and protect the buildings, sites, structures, districts, and objects that comprise and define Connecticut's cultural heritage.

The 12-person, governor appointed council gathered on August 5, 2009 in Hartford, Connecticut during a CTN News Network televised meeting. The quick unanimous vote was the result of six months of work that included the development of a lengthy application and visits to the school by state historic officials. The Thompson Board of Education supported the application process, and its unanimous vote to pursue the application process in a meeting held in 2008 paved the way for the final State approval.

"This is a great event for the Town of Thompson," states Joe lamartino, Thompson town

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## MEMORIAL ROOM WORK BEGINS



*Left: Workers begin preparing the Memorial Room for restoration. The work includes repainting the walls and ceiling, polishing and lacquering the brass railings, cleaning and polishing the Terrazzo floors, cleaning the hard surface artifacts and inventorying and cataloguing all the items in the room. Alumni volunteers have donated many hundreds of hours to date.*

Alumni volunteers, to include Gladys (Krigsman) Tucker '52, Connie (Jacobson) Carpenter '54, Rita (Groh) Rohr '56, Jim Sali '51, Liz Burton (Associate Member), Sally White '72, June (Zmitrukiewicz) Duclos '72, Joe Lindley '74 and the Thompson Public School's maintenance crew, with the help of Russ Heath, art expert and restorer, have taken on the huge task of bringing the 1909 Tourtellotte Memorial Room back to its original days of grandeur.

The task includes the removal, cleaning, inventorying and cataloguing all the paintings and artifacts located in the room. This information, along with a summary of the methods and procedures used, will be outlined in a book that will eventually be published by the Alumni Association for future generations to better understand the gifts left by the Tourtellottes and the stories behind the items.

During the work process the group found evidence of the original 1907 paint and stencil scheme. This area of the Memorial Room has not been seen by human eyes for more than 70 years. This section of the wall was photographed and the area will be preserved.

The work includes repainting the walls and ceilings, repairing the air conditioning ducts, polishing the floor, polishing and re-lacquering the brass rails and re-stenciling the walls.

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historian and president of the Historical Society. "This helps us to not only recognize one of the most historically significant buildings in town, it opens possibilities that may ultimately help us restore and protect the building."

The 1909 High School was built and donated to the Town of Thompson by Dr. Jacob Francis Tourtellotte and Harriet Tourtellotte in 1907 as a memorial to their two daughters, Frances and Harriet Tourtellotte, who passed away as young girls. "Recently, we uncovered information that further indicates that in addition to their extremely philanthropic work, the Tourtellottes deeply missed their daughters and wanted to leave a permanent reminder behind of the two young girls," states Joe Lindley, president of the Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association. "This September the school turns 100 years old and the state historic recognition could not have come at a better time."

### **TOURTELLOTTE TRUST BYLAWS APPROVED BY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

On July 22, 2009, the newly formed Tourtellotte Board of Trustees approved a set of bylaws under which the Board will operate for the next 100 years. This is a major step in further securing the nearly \$2.4M that remain in the Tourtellotte Trust. The first step was the passing of a town ordinance calling for the formation of the board. This was approved in a town meeting this past summer. The following is a copy of the bylaws.

#### **By laws of the Jacob and Harriett Arnold Tourtellotte Board of Trustees JULY 22, 2009**

##### **ARTICLE 1: Mission and Statement of Purpose**

The mission of the Dr. Jacob Francis and Harriet Arnold Tourtellotte Board of Trustees, hereafter called BOT, is to manage and maintain the Tourtellotte Trust in a manner which honors and complies with the wishes of the original donors, Dr. Jacob Francis Tourtellotte and Harriet Arnold Tourtellotte, for the Maintenance and Extension of the Free Memorial High School.

##### **ARTICLE 2: Definitions**

The following are definitions for key terms.

- a. **"Free Memorial High School"**  
The "Free Memorial High School" is defined as the building and originally donated contents listed in Jacob Tourtellotte's will, subsequent codicil dated November 11, 1914 and other historical documents. The "Free Memorial High School" was constructed by the Tourtellottes as a memorial to their two predeceased daughters, Harriet and Lucinda Tourtellotte and presented to the Town of Thompson on September 7, 1909 during a public ceremony.
- b. **"Extension of the Free Memorial High School"**  
It is understood that the Tourtellottes desired the expansion and improvement of said Free Memorial High School. In his codicil dated November 11, 1914, Jacob Tourtellotte stated "...if there be more than sufficient income for the proper maintenance and support of said (Free Memorial) High School, then the excess of said

income shall be used by the said Town of Thompson for the benefit of said High School and the extension of its work and efforts in the educational lines." It is hereby established that the "...extension of its work and efforts," shall include all additions and expansions to the physical facility, academic curriculum, and extracurricular programs of Tourtellotte Memorial High School.

##### **ARTICLE 3: Membership**

- a. The BOT shall consist of seven (7) voting members as follows:
  1. The First Selectman of the Town of Thompson
  2. Chairperson of the Board of Education of the Town of Thompson
  3. Chairperson of the Board of Finance of the Town of Thompson
  4. Superintendent of School of the Town of Thompson
  5. President of the Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association
  6. President of the Thompson Historical Society
  7. Finance Director of the Town of Thompson
- b. Any of the aforementioned individual may serve by virtue of their office or position or may designate another member of their respective Board or Society to serve as the designated agent of said Board or Society.
- c. From time to time Advisory Trustees may be invited to become part of the BOT. Advisory Trustees will be non-voting members and may consist of the following:
  1. Descendants of Harriet and Jacob Tourtellotte.
  2. Local experts or special interest groups whose expertise or focus may help the BOT's decision making process.
- d. In no case shall one person fill more than one position listed above in Article 3.a. In the event that one person fills two or more positions listed in Article 3.a (e.g. First Selectman and President of the Historical Society), that person is to appoint a representative from one of the organizations or positions he/she represents.

##### **ARTICLE 4: Officers**

- a. The BOT shall have three (3) officers who shall be elected by a majority vote during a BOT meeting held by the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of January of each year.
- b. All parliamentary procedures outlined in Robert's Rules shall apply for nominating, electing and appointing officers. Officers shall hold their offices for a period of one (1) year.  
Officers shall consist of:
  1. Chairperson
  2. Secretary
  3. Treasurer
- c. The above listed officers shall follow office duties as outlined in Roberts Rules.

##### **ARTICLE 5: Responsibilities**

The BOT shall hire, supervise, and discharge as necessary such professional investment advisors as deemed appropriate to support the mission of the Tourtellotte Municipal Trust.

The BOT shall also:

- a. Direct the investments with assistance of advisors and determine the annual reinvestment amounts and/or percentages.
- b. Hear recommendations and suggestions for the appropriation and expenditure of annual funds from the public.

## 5 things you may *NOT* know about TMHS

1. The Memorial Room artwork and artifacts were placed in the room on three separate occasions. The first original collection was donated to the school and arranged by Mrs. Tourtellotte in 1909. The second round most likely came after the death of Mr. Tourtellotte in 1912 when Mrs. Tourtellotte moved to No. Grosvenordale to be closer to the memorial she created for her daughters. The last round came after the death of Mrs. Tourtellotte in 1919. These items were donated to the Memorial Room by Mrs. Tourtellotte's family. From what we can find this collection is the largest of its type in the country.
2. A recently found 1931 Annual Superintendent's Report listed the average scores of the students along with the number of "retarded" students in each class. This practice was stopped at some point after 1931 as our understanding of social disorders and learning disabilities grew.
3. The Memorial Room pink color scheme dates to 1938. The original scheme was much more elaborate and can be seen in the 1914 Tourtellotte family book.
4. According to the 1967 yearbook, when Mr. Ryscavage was appointed superintendent in 1947 he had 475 total students. By 1967 this figure rose to 1230. Current enrollment is approximately 1350.
5. Ted Fatsi was appointed principle of TMHS in 1965.

### New Arrival

Congratulations to Danny Almquist, Class of 1948, on the arrival of his fourth great-grandchild, Nova Lynn Almquist, born August 6, 2009 in Putnam, Connecticut. Dan splits his time between Show Lo, Arizona and Bradenton, Florida. Congratulations Dan!

### Banquet Improvement Ideas

During the August Alumni meeting, the group discussed improvement opportunities for next year's Alumni banquet. If you have any suggestions on how to make the event even more memorable, please send it to [TMHSAA@Charter.net](mailto:TMHSAA@Charter.net).

### Time Capsule

The Alumni Association has plans to place a time capsule in the Memorial Room to be opened in September, 2109. If you have a story you would like to share with future generations please send them to TMHSAA, PO Box 437, No. Grosvenordale CT, 06255. We will be organizing the stories in a small booklet and sealing it to be opened on September 9, 2109.

According to the alumni executive staff, this project is the largest historical restoration project ever attempted at the school. The current long-term plan also includes cycling out the art work for repair and restoration. It also includes the cleaning and assessment of the 1909 building exterior. The building assessment process will include minor repairs and the creation of a priority repair list.

This work is the culmination of the Alumni Association pressing for a 1909 building and Memorial Room restoration solution, the town passing the ordinance protecting the Tourtellotte funds, and the formation of the Tourtellotte Board of Trustees. "Without the community coming together on this very significant and historical issue, this would not have been possible," reports Joe Lindley '74, President of the TMHSAA.

### Photos from the past: (Can anyone guess the year?)



Front (L-R) Rachel Coderre Haggerty, Helen Rice Miner, Georgette DeNome, Virginia Bates, Carolyn Mador. Second Row: Jeannie Morgan, Harriett Patterson Goulet, Margaret Cunha Bibek, Doris Leavens, Victoria Poplawski, Jesse Eddy Hughes. Back row: Richard Mead, Theodor Fatsi, Robert Willet, Leo Beaulac, Sonny Prince, Richard Hagstrom Photo compliments of Helen Rice Miner.

### We are looking for articles of past classes!

Send them to: [TMHSAA@Charter.net](mailto:TMHSAA@Charter.net)

### Have Articles or Stories??

Submit them to:

[TMHSAA@Charter.net](mailto:TMHSAA@Charter.net)

Or mail them to:

**TMHS Alumni Association**  
PO Box 437

No. Grosvenordale, CT 06255

- c. Determine funds to be requested for the upcoming town budget, on an annual basis..
- d. Ensure a majority vote of a quorum to move the recommendations to the Board of Education.
- e. Ensure that no Trust expenditures shall be made unless approved by the Board of Trustees.
- f. Ensure that at no time is the principle of the fund to be used. Any funds designated by the BOT for reinvestment shall become part of the principle.
- g. Ensure all Trust financials are audited annually consistent with town policy.

**ARTICLE 6: Meetings**

- a. All meetings and BOT proceedings will use parliamentary procedures as described in Robert's Rules of Order.
- b. The BOT shall hold an annual meeting on the first Monday of February of each year to determine the amount of net Trust income which may be prudently appropriated for the ensuing fiscal year. Careful consideration shall be given to both the purposes of the Trust and its purpose as a permanent fund.
- c. The Trustees shall hold a public hearing either simultaneously with or following the aforementioned meeting to hear testimony from the public as to the appropriate expenditures of Trust funds for the ensuing fiscal year.
- d. Special meetings may be called by the BOT at any time.
- e. All meetings will be noticed and recorded in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

**ARTICLE 7: Trust Efficacy and Efficiency**

One hundred years from the date of this adoption, July 24, 2109, the then Trustees of the Trust shall review the efficacy and efficiency of the Trust in terms of carrying out its originally stated mission and shall make such recommendations to the Board of Selectmen or the town's current administrative body and the town legislative body as seem to them necessary and proper.

**ARTICLE 8: By Law Changes and Amendments**

Changes in these by laws may be recommended at the annual meeting and require five (5) votes of the seven (7) members of the BOT to pass.

**ARTICLE 9: Provision of Law**

If there is any conflict between these by-laws and any provision of State or Federal Law or Town Ordinance, the provision of law shall control.

**ARTICLE 10: Location of By-laws**

The by-laws and any amendment(s) shall be filed with the Town Clerk's Office and included with the Ordinance Establishing the Jacob F. Tourtellotte and Harriet Arnold Tourtellotte Trust Fund for the Maintenance and Extension of the Free Memorial High School.

**1997 Tourtellotte Article Found During Recent Restoration Project**

Among the many treasures we have rediscovered in the Tourtellotte Memorial Room during our recent restoration project, we found a piece written in February of 1997 titled, *A Tale of a Family*. The article was written by Ruth DeAmicis for News and Notes, Association of Northeastern Connecticut Historical Societies.

Ruth was the Tourtellotte Memorial Room curator from 1990 to 1997. She was appointed to the position by Thompson First Selectman, Donald E. Williams on November 19, 1990, replacing the notable long-time resident and town historian, Alice Ramsdell. Ruth remains active in history and the curatorial arts and is now a Board of Directors member of the Wichendon, Massachusetts Historical Society.

We hope you enjoy the article.

***A Tale of a Family  
The Tourtellottes of Thompson***

*Researched and Written by Ruth DeAmicis*

*The family responsible for building the Tourtellotte Memorial High School in Thompson is but a branch of a colorful family tree.*

*Jacob Francis Tourtellotte, known as Frank to family and friends, was born in Wilsonville in 1835. The house still stands, on the curve near Lowell Davis Road. Frank was sent to school at Nichol's Academy when old enough, and there he met Harriet Arnold.*

*Harriet was also born in Thompson, in the Fabyan section near Woodstock. Her father ran the stores and farms for the giant mills in North Grosvenordale. In appreciation for his hard work, the Grosvenors and Masons awarded William Arnold a one-eighth share of the mill. Only one other non-family member was awarded this honor. Arnold sent his daughter to the Nichols Academy as well, being a strong believer in education for women.*

*The two were happy teenagers, and when Frank went off to Columbia College for medicine, and Harriet went to Salem Normal School of Music, they kept close through correspondence. Once graduated, they met in New York and were married in 1860. Harriet set up housekeeping in New York, Frank joined the Navy and was assigned as ship's surgeon on a ship off the Florida Keys watching for brigands and pirates supplying the South. Once the Civil War ended, Frank's ship was sent off the coast of Chile, once again on the prowl for pirates.*

*Frank's health wasn't good, however. Conflicting reports mention heart disease, respiratory problems, and exhaustion. Frank left the Navy and chose to move halfway across the country to the small city of Winona in Minnesota. He gave up his surgeon's practice altogether, and turned to private banking and real estate speculation. He was good at it. His first child Harriet Lucina Mary, was born in 1870 [Note:*

*continued on page 5*



*Left: One of Mrs. Tourtellotte's more elaborate tea sets given to her by one of her many friends. TMHSAA plans to feature the collection in the next **hilltopper**.*

We believe this might be 1869]. Tragically, she died of scarlet fever before she reached the age of one. The single portrait of here was painted from a death photo in one of the family albums.

Four years later, Frances Harriet was born. A lively child, she was doted on by her parents, and was the center of their lives. In 1884, the family traveled to Baltimore as a birthday gift for little Hattie. While there, at one of P.T. Barnum's fabulous hotels, Hattie became ill. Overnight she worsened and, by the next afternoon, she was dead. The obituary claims "paralysis of the heart" as the cause of death. In reality, it could have been anything from a burst appendix to food poisoning.

The heartbroken parents went back to Winona. By this time, their investments had moved closer to Minneapolis. Harriet had invested some funds in apartment houses and was prospering. By 1895, Harriet wanted to move to the bigger city, and the couple purchased a larger house facing Loring Park. Harriet added a music room and conservatory to the back of the house to hold her grand piano, and to add space for entertainment.

Harriet threw herself into charitable work, working for Asbury Hospital, North Western Hospital, the YWCA, and others. She filled her days with fundraisers and meetings. When contacted by the committee in Thompson doing fundraising to build a public high school, both Frank and Harriet agreed it would be a perfect memorial to their own two daughters, who never lived long enough to attend high school.

Despite conflicts within the town over where to place the building, the land donated by the mill on top of the hill was deemed a perfect place. The building was put up in a matter of two years. It was one of the first in the nation to include both electricity and plumbing in the design. I was also one of the first to have a basketball court incorporated into the gym. As part of the dream, Harriet requested a room be built to house memorabilia of the family. She generously donated, bronzes and collectables. When Frank died in 1912, Harriet closed her house in Minneapolis and moved back to Thompson. She donated more items at that time, including the grand piano in the auditorium. When she died in 1919, the family gave a few more items to the Memorial Room.

This room is "stuffed" with items. In a room meant to hold only the first donations, the additional things have crowded one another for space. It is a treasure trove of Victorian life. Here, in Harriet's tea cup collections: her spoon collection: her collectable plates and family items, the story of the family can be retraced. Here, one can find little Hattie's dresser box, with her father's portrait in a locket: a well worn copper ring, and a memorial ribbon from Papa's membership in the GAR. Here, can be found a sampler dated 1810, carefully wrought by Frank's mother Polly Ballard. The portraits on the walls of

family members include a judge, a general, a balloon "aeronaut," and others.

Truly a family representative of Victorians, the Tourtellottes were generous to a fault. In addition to the High School, they made possible for a home for Methodist workers to be built in Minneapolis; a dormitory wing to be built at Connecticut College for Women; and a chapel to be built at Putnam Cemetery.

Editor's notes: According to Joe Iamartino, Thompson Town Historian, there are still some parts of the story yet to be confirmed, but we feel Ruth's work is one of the best summaries available to date.

## How Can I Help?

### There are many ways to help the effort!

With the many projects we have in process, many alumni unable to get to the school and donate time have asked "How can I help?" Here's a couple of ways:

1. **AUDITORIUM SEATS:** We are soliciting funds to rebuild 1909 auditorium seats. The cost is \$100.00 per seat. A plaque will be added to the back of the seat listing the benefactor. Checks can be mailed to the TMHSAA address or call Rachael (LeFleur) Johnston at 860-923-3377.
2. **DONATIONS:** Anyone wishing to make donations to the Alumni Association can contact Rachael (LaFleur) Johnston at 860-923-3377. We are accepting anonymous and cause specific donations.
3. **ARCHIVAL SUPPLIES:** We are in dire need of archival supplies to include boxes, files, and other containers. Anyone wishing to donate to this aspect of the project or has access to archival supplies; please contact Joe Lindley at 860-928-5527.
4. **HILLTOPPER EDITORS AND WRITERS:** In order to publish the hilltopper monthly, more help is needed. Anyone with writing, editorial skills or just like to reminisce can become part of the staff. Anyone interested can contact Joe Lindley at 860-928-5527.

### HELP US STAY GREEN!

Become connected and help TMHSAA save postage. If you receive the *hilltopper* by USPS mail and have an Email address, simply send your electronic address to [TMHSAA@charter.net](mailto:TMHSAA@charter.net) and request an electronic copy.



Above: A sample of the original colors and stencil work of the Memorial Room. This work would have been completed under the watchful eye of Mrs. Tourtellotte during the 1907-1909 construction. The restoration work group was stunned when this section of wall, covered by the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Tourtellotte, was uncovered, as no one knew this evidence existed.



Above: Contractors and TPS Facilities Manager, Bill Birch, inspect mahogany wall restoration efforts. This section of the wall was damaged during the 2006 water leak. Experts have been able to restore the wall to its 1907 condition.



Left: The original brass railings which have been dismantled. These will be sent out, polished and re-lacquered using circa 1909 techniques. It is the group's intent to use age appropriate restoration techniques where possible.



Above: Among the maintenance crew that has helped with the restoration project include, (Left to right) Mark Lambert '76, Mark Ruoppo '79, Bill Birch (Facility's Director), Chad Rolfe, Jim Burgers, Don Fisher, and Dean Wilga '72.



Above: A section of the Memorial Room scraped and repaired and waiting for its new coat of paint. This picture gives us a hint of the yellow color originally selected by Mrs. Tourtellotte. Below: Another view of the Memorial Room. Again, we can see part of the original color scheme. The dark items in the sky light are corroded vents that have already been replaced.



## Visit us at:

[www.thompsonpublicschools.org/TMHSAA/index.html](http://www.thompsonpublicschools.org/TMHSAA/index.html)

For past editions of the *hilltopper*, announcements, applications, and updates. Become involved! Send us your stories!



Above: A picture of the Memorial Room circa 1914. This picture was taken for the Tourtellotte/Arnold family book. The picture shows the original, very detailed stencil work, most likely designed and/or approved by Mrs. Tourtellotte during the building's construction in 1907-1909. The restoration committee solicited the advice of several curatorial experts before deciding how to repaint the room and found the original color scheme cost prohibitive and the current scheme, circa 1939, to be appropriate for a room of this nature. The new paint and restoration will make the room shine like new. The new Tourtellotte Committee will then decide how we make the room more accessible to our community and the general public.

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Initial membership due at time of application, yearly renewals due January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year

Regular Membership..... \$15.00  
Senior Citizens (65 and older)..... \$5.00  
Graduating Class..... Free

### hilltopper Staff

Editor: Joe Lindley '74'

Staff Members: Jim Sali '51' - Gladys Tucker '52' - Jane Ellison '61' - Eileen Deary '77' - Sandy Becker '79' - Rachael Johnston '75' Alex Kirkland '08'

Archives: Gladys Tucker '52' and Rita Rohr '56

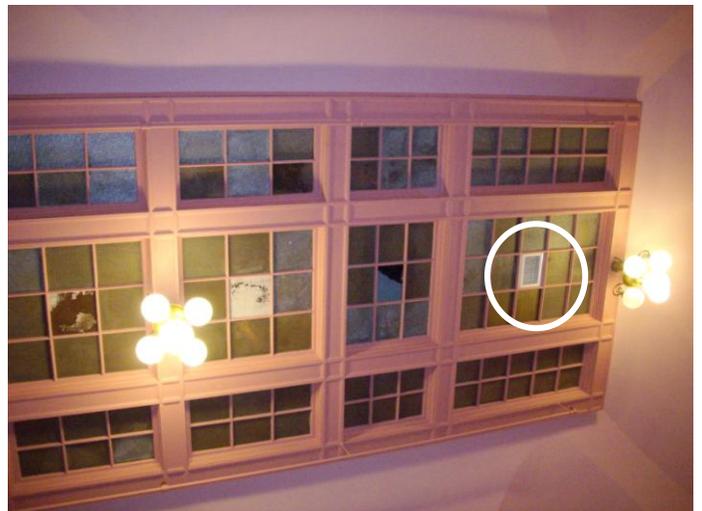
If you would like to contribute short stories to the *hilltopper* please contact Joe Lindley at [joelindley119@hotmail.com](mailto:joelindley119@hotmail.com)



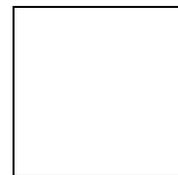
Above: Betsey M. (Duclos) Kuhn, Class of 1992. Daughter of June (Zmitrukiewicz) Duclous '72, TMHSAA executive staff member.



Above: Heavy Equipment used to clean the exterior of the 1909 Tourtellotte building. The TMHSAA would encourage alumni to drive by the school and see the building. It looks brand new!  
Below: The skylights of the Memorial Room. All the duct vents — have been replaced with new registers. One can be seen highlighted on the right of the picture below.



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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED  
PLEASE SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS TO:  
TMHSAA@Charter.net