
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Volume 24 Issue 4

Groton, Vermont 05046

Fall 2011

REMEMBERING WILLIAM SCOTT

150 years ago in the Civil War

Abstracted from Dennis A. Hermann's article in 2007

MEETING SCHEDULE

10 AM the second Tuesday
of May through October
at the Peter Paul House
1203 Scott Highway
Groton, VT 05046

2011 OFFICERS

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Vice President	Deane Page
Secretary	Josephine French
Treasurer	Joan Haskell

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Protection of Washington City was paramount early in the Civil War, as well as, throughout the war. Confederate Virginia was just across the Potomac River and Maryland had considered joining the Confederate cause and harbored many secessionists.

The Union did gain possession of some of northern Virginia early in the war. Many national forts had been built there over the years to protect Washington. These forts were fortified and held by the Union. This buffer area was heavily occupied with Union troops, and additional forts continued to be built there during the war.

Upon arriving in Washington, the 3rd Vermont Infantry and other Vermont regiments began their great, war adventure by marching up the bank of the Union side of Potomac River to the Chain Bridge and

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proceeded to construct their new home, Camp Lyon.

Captain House was the Officer of the Grand Guard on August 31, 1861. He was responsible for a section of advanced sentinel posts along the Potomac above Camp Lyon. This was serious business for across that small span of water the enemy watched and waited. The soldiers who had duty in this section that warm, quiet August night were the Captain's comrades, members of the 3rd Vermont Infantry.

Three men were stationed at each post. One would stand watch while the other two slept. Each took their turn. About 3:00 A.M., Captain House began his rounds, checking each post. To his surprise and dismay he found all three soldiers, asleep at a post.

He instantly woke all three and demanded to know which one of them was to be on watch at that post!

Private William Scott of Company K admitted it was him. Scott was arrested for "Sleeping on Duty". A guilty verdict by Court-Martial would be "Death".

In June 1861 twenty-two year old William Scott and seven other Groton, Vermont farm boys said goodbye to their families and homes to proudly answer the call and do their patriotic duty for the Union.

The recruits rendezvoused at Camp Baxter, St. Johnsbury, mustering in as the 3rd Vermont Infantry July 16th. As the regiment readied for the field, the Battle of Bull Run July 21, 1861 was raging. The regiment of 882 officers and men (included a 24 piece regimental band) boarded a twenty-two car train to the overwhelming cheers of hundreds the morning of July 24th, and the boys headed to their fate.

At each stop on their way to Washington crowds saluted, cheered and served them refreshments. At Springfield, Massachusetts an artillery salute welcomed the boys. The Sons of Vermont at Hartford, Connecticut presented the regiment with a white silk flag with the arms of Vermont and of the city on it. Thousands lined the streets to shout and cheer as the Green Mountain boys marched to the patriotic songs played by their regimental band

through the streets of New York City. The boys' heads were high and their chests' out as they marched in their new uniforms with a sprig of pine fastened to their caps. Philadelphia served them a dinner fit for royalty. The boys must have felt they had already won the war!

Arriving July 26th in Washington, the boys slept that night in a public hall.

Colonel William Farrar "Baldy" Smith, a Vermont native, joined and took command of the 3rd Vermont Infantry on the 26th.

On July 27th the regiment received the Colonel's first orders. Scott and the regiment fell in and marched along the Potomac River about three miles above Georgetown to Chain Bridge. There they constructed Camp Lyon.

Chain Bridge and the surrounding area were very strategic. If a Confederate attack came in this area, the bridge would be the objective for no other bridge was within five miles. If lost, Washington could be invaded.

Early in August 1861 Colonel W. F. Smith, West Point graduate, became commander of Ft. Lyon. On August 13th, Colonel Smith was appointed Brigadier General of Volunteers and Brigade Commander, Division of the Potomac. Early October he was Division Commander, Army of the Potomac, Major General George McClellan Commanding. The 3rd Vermont Infantry served in his brigade.

Due to no hostilities, time, and being in close proximity, the warring factions at Chain Bridge had become very sociable – conversing with each other, trading items – more like friends or neighbors than enemies. Possibly, William Scott might have indulged in these exchanges.

General Smith saw this as a severe failure of his soldiers and a severe threat to the safety of Washington. He immediately enforced strict discipline, ordered no fraternizing with the enemy and issued orders declaring death for military infractions, including sleeping at a post.

Justice was dealt quickly in William Scott's case. He was arrested August 31, 1861 for sleeping at his post. Special Order No. 23 was issued from Headquarters Army of the Potomac, Washington

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September 2nd 1861: “A General Court-Martial is hereby appointed to meet at the Camp of Smith’s Brigade (*Camp Lyon*) at 10 o’clock A.M. on Tuesday, the 3rd day of September 1861 for the trial of such prisoners as may be brought before it ... By command of Major General McClellan.”

The proceedings, findings and sentence in the case are approved, the sentence is confirmed, and Pvt. William Scott, Co. K, 3d Regt. Vermont Volunteers, will be shot to death on Monday the 9th of September, 1861, at such hour and place as the Brigade commander may determine.”

One can only guess what Scott’s frame of mind was while confined and knowing he had only a few days left to live. He had not put forth a defense in his behalf.

Several pertinent factors were not revealed at the trial. The most compelling was that Scott had volunteered to take the place of a sick fellow soldier, who was detailed for sentinel duty the night of August 29th. Scott spent that night on sentinel duty. Returning from this duty the next morning, Scott found he was detailed the same duty for that night. Sleep was not an option upon his return, for the camp regimentation and routine had to be followed and obeyed.

Scott did not have witnesses on his behalf to testify to his character and as a soldier. It is not recorded if he tried to obtain character witnesses.

It probably would have been impossible for Scott to get fellow soldiers and officers to speak on his behalf for the war intervened.

On September 3rd, the day of Scott’s trial, General Smith marshaled his Brigade and under the cover of darkness, charged across the Chain Bridge into Confederate Virginia. The raw Union forces successfully entered the war by swarming into the enemy territory for a mile and held their position, aptly named Camp Advance.

The men of the 3rd Vermont gathered, when possible, to discuss a plea to stop Scott’s execution. It was decided

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WORLD WAR II STORIES – PART VIII

The Eastman Brothers

Earl Bartlett
"Bart"



Howard Roger

GROTON COUPLE HAVE FIVE SONS IN THE SERVICE

Three Eastman Boys In
Pacific War Zone And
Two In Training

Five sons of Mr. and Mrs. Roger Eastman of Groton are serving Uncle Sam, three in the Pacific war area and two in this country. Harold and Kenneth Eastman were on the transport President Coolidge which was sunk in the fall. Both escaped and were safe when heard from the first of the year.

Lloyd Eastman, who is in aviation ordnance, is also on the Pacific battle front. Earl Eastman is an armorer and mechanic in the air corps, stationed at Lincoln, Neb., while Howard is at Camp Lee, Va., having come to Fort Devens on Dec. 26. Mr. and Mrs. Eastman have lived in Groton for a long time and the boys received their education at the graded and high school there.

There are six other children in the family: three more boys at home and three daughters, two of whom are married. The Eastmans offer ample proof of the reasons for Vermont's standing second in the nation in army enlistments, on a population percentage basis, since the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The boys' addresses are as follows: Sgt. Harold L. Eastman, Tech. IV 20,168,830, A. P. O. 708, c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, Cal.; Corp. Kenneth L. Eastman, Tech. V 20,162,825, A. P. O. 708, c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, Cal.; Pvt. Bernice Lloyd Eastman, 31,114,639, A. P. O. 959, c/o Postmaster San Francisco, Cal.; Pvt. Earl B. Eastman, 18th T. S. S. Bn. 827, Army Air Base, Lincoln, Neb.; and Pvt. Howard R. Eastman, Co. B, Bk. T-437, 7th Qm. T. R., Camp Lee, Va.



"Ken"
Kenneth Linwood



Harold Lee "Tom"



L. Bernice Lloyd "Harry"
R. Kenneth "Ken"

Carroll "Tappy" (1925-2009) also enlisted in the Army and

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served in the European theater from 1943 to 1946. And Robert "Bob" born in 1932 served in the Korean War. The clipping and family information was sent to the Historical Society by their niece, Betty (Murray) Smallacombe, daughter of their sister Carrie, from their family scrapbook.

Following is the news article in bigger print for ease in reading.

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You can read more about Ken's and Tom's story in the winter and spring 2010 newsletters in the World War II stories written by Dale Brown.

Which are you?

I watched them tearing a building down,
a gang of men in a busy town;
with a ho-heave-ho and a lusty yell
they swung a beam and the sidewall fell.
I asked the foreman: "Are these men skilled,
and the men you'd hire if you had to build?"
He gave a laugh and said: "No indeed!
Just common labor is all I need.
I can easily wreck in a day or two
what builders have taken a year to do!"

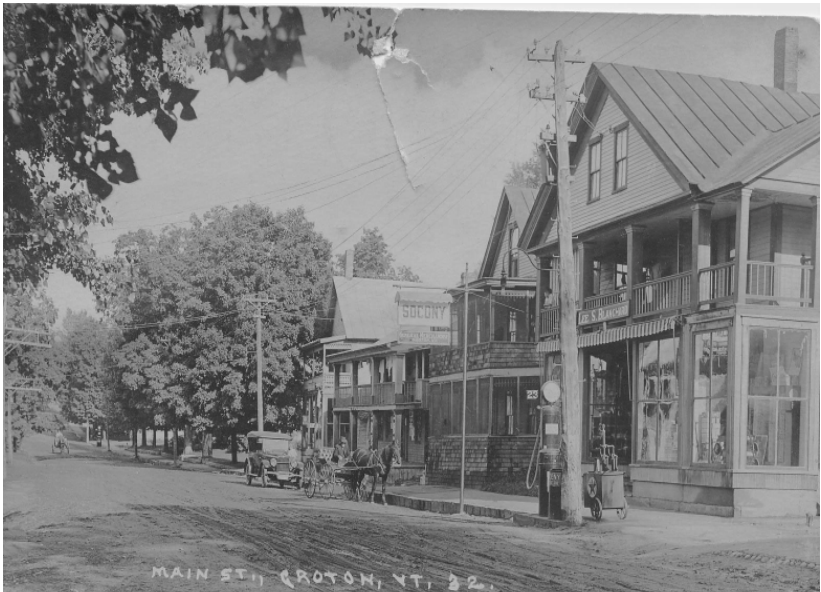
And I thought to myself as I went my way,
which of these roles have I tried to play?
Am I a builder, who works with care,
measuring life by the rule and square?
Am I shaping my deeds to a well-made plan,
patiently doing the best I can?
Or am I a wrecker, who walks the town,
content with the labor of tearing down.

Author unknown

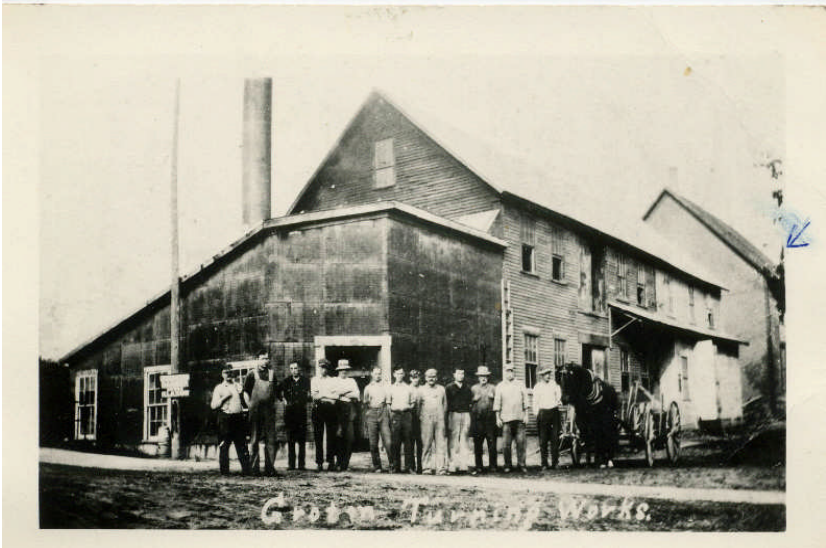
Groton Photos Digitized by Dick Kreis



Mills at Bridge on Powder Spring Road



Main Street



Work Crew at the Turning Works



Village School

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that a petition to spare William Scott's life was needed. This would take time getting signatures, and the petition had to go up the chain of command. Committees were set up, and signatures were quickly collected.

Captain Leonard Bennett of Company K and the regimental chaplain, Moses Parmellee, were two of the leading forces trying to save Scott.

Four pages of 3rd Vermont soldiers' signatures, approximately 200, were on the petition, including the regimental chaplain, eight company captains, many lieutenants, noncommissioned officers and numerous privates. Even Captain Thomas House, who found Scott sleeping on duty, signed the petition.

"General Smith endorsed the petition, sent it Sunday, September 8, 1861, by a major to General McClellan's headquarters six miles away in Washington, the major stopping in at the White House to show it to the President." (*Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* Vol 3, Sandburg, Carl pg 530) General McClellan had reviewed Scott's case immediately after the court martial and approved the findings and confirmed the sentence.

While the petition was going through military channels, Anne Collins King's letter of September 8, 1861 went directly to President Lincoln. Her remarkable, eloquent and persuasive letter pleaded for Scott's life and his worth.

Anne King was the wife of Horatio King, who served as Postmaster General of the United States under President Buchanan and for Lincoln from February 12 until March 7, 1861.

A third effort to save Scott's life was occurring at the same time.

A group of officers and privates from the 3rd Vermont met with fellow Vermonter, Lucius E. Chittenden, Register of the Treasury and an attorney, at his office in Washington.

The Captain of the group (probably Bennett of Company K) passionately explained to Chittenden the circumstances of Scott's plight and their efforts to have his life spared. He explained that Scott was a good soldier, his record was good, they all were

still raw recruits not yet hardened to military ways and of his lack of sleep helping a comrade. It also was the opinion of the group and Scott's fellow soldiers, that although falling asleep was wrong, it should not warrant death.

Chittenden immediately knew only President Lincoln could help. Following Chittenden, the group went to the White House and found themselves in Lincoln's presence.

"What is this?" Lincoln asked. "An expedition to kidnap somebody, or to get another brigadier appointed, or for a furlough to go home to vote? I cannot do it, gentlemen. Brigadiers are thicker than drum-majors, and I couldn't get a furlough for myself if I asked it from the War Department."

"Mr. President these men want nothing for themselves. They are Green Mountain boys of the Third Vermont, who have come to stay as long as you need good soldiers. They don't want promotion until they earn it. But they do want something that you alone can give them – the life of a comrade," Chittenden said. (*Lincoln and the Sleeping Sentinel: The True Story* Chittenden, L. E. pg. 27)

Realizing that Scott's life depended on him, the Captain told the complete story to President Lincoln factually, in vivid detail with high emotions. He told the President that Scott was no coward and he would fulfill his sworn duty.

After hearing the story, Lincoln said, "I do not think an honest, brave soldier, conscious of no crime but sleeping when he was weary, ought to be shot or hung. The country has better uses for him. Captain, your boy shall not be shot – that is, not tomorrow, nor until I know more about his case." (*Lincoln and the Sleeping Sentinel: The True Story* Chittenden, L. E. pg. 31)

The group hurried back to tell Scott he was not to be executed the next day!

From his place of confinement of eight days and eight nights of the torture of thinking about his death, Private William Scott marched into the beautiful morning sunlight and was positioned before his regiment, his comrades. How could he repay his comrades for all they had done for him? Scott knew he had a reprieve from execution, but for how long

Asa Blunt, Adjutant 3rd Vermont Infantry, approached and

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read to Private William Scott and all present the charges and the court martial proceedings. He folded the papers, put them in his coat and then pulled out and read the General Order No. 8 issued by Major General McClellan, Commanding, Army of the Potomac.

Headquarters of the Army of the Potomac

Washington, September 8.

Private William Scott, of Company K, of the Third regiment of Vermont volunteers, having been found guilty by court martial of sleeping on his post while a sentinel on picket duty, has been sentenced to be shot, and the sentence has been approved and ordered to be executed. The commanding officers of the brigade, the regiment and the company, of the command, together with many other privates and officers of his regiment, have earnestly appealed to the Major-General commanding, to spare the life of the offender, and the President of the United States has expressed a wish that as this is the first condemnation to death in this army for this crime, mercy may be extended to the criminal. This fact, viewed in connection with the inexperience of the condemned as a soldier, his previous good conduct and general good character, and the urgent entreaties made in his behalf, have determined the Major-General commanding to grant the pardon so earnestly prayed for. This act of clemency must not be understood as affording a precedent for any future case. The duty of a sentinel is of such a nature, that its neglect by sleeping upon or deserting his post may endanger the safety of a command, or even of the whole army, and all nations affix to the offence the penalty of death. Private William Scott of Co. K, of the Third regiment of Vermont volunteers, will be released from confinement and returned to duty.

A thousand cheers thundered and echoed throughout Camp Advance! Although by the order, General McClellan issued the pardon and President Lincoln only expressed a wish for mercy, the soldiers knew the pardon came from President Lincoln. Cheers for President Lincoln were raised again and again!

The news of the pardon was leaked and the Washington newspapers' editions were coming out with the details at the same time the Order was being read to Scott.

From the 9th day of September 1861, Private William Scott Company K, 3rd Regiment Vermont Volunteer Infantry became known and immortalized as the:

Sleeping Sentinel

IN MEMORIUM

N. Dale Brown, 92, of Scott Highway, died peacefully on Wednesday, July 20, 2011 at the Grafton County Nursing Home, North Haverhill, NH. He was born in Groton, VT, October 24, 1918, the son of Burton L. and Minnie L. (Chase) Brown. Dale graduated from Groton High School, Class of 1935 and from Norwich University in Northfield, VT, Class of 1939. Dale married Janice Arlene Wills on August 5, 1939. Dale served as a sergeant, Headquarters Company, Second Battalion, 172d Infantry with the National Guard. He was called for active duty and served in the U.S. Army with the Officers Reserve Corps as a 2nd Lieutenant with the Calvary Reserve. Dale and Janice moved to Ohio, where Dale went to work for Goodyear Aircraft and Aerospace for 40 plus years. While working at Goodyear, he was a member of the team that designed and engineered airships including the Goodyear Blimp, aircrafts, aeronautics for the space shuttle, and products for the Goodyear Tire Manufacturing Division. Dale and Janice retired back to Vermont in September of 1981. He served on the Groton Selectboard for two terms and was a member of the Blue Mountain Union School Board. He was a member of the Groton Historical Society and the Lighter than Air Society. Dale designed the Groton Town Garage and interior areas of the Groton Community Building. He was very proud of the two homes he had built for his family, in Ohio and Groton. Dale loved the outdoors and working in the fresh air. He loved gardening, maple sugaring, land surveying, bee lining, and genealogy. Dale had a passion for music and loved to play the organ and piano. He was a devoted husband and loved spending time with his wife, daughters and grandchildren. He was predeceased by his wife of 68 years, Janice Arlene Brown on February 2, 2008; and a son-in-law, Richard "Dick" Kreis on March 8, 2010. Survivors include his three loving daughters, Diane H. Kreis of Groton, VT, Judith Lee Robinson of Collegeville, PA, and Teresa W. Kirk and husband Gary of Newark, DE; five granddaughters, Kelley Kreis of Crest Hill, IL, Kimberley Stenson of Charlotte, NC, Shannon Kreis of Shorewood, IL, Renea Rieser and husband Chris of Collegeville, PA, and Denise Boyle and husband Brian of Blue Bell, PA; seven great grandchildren; two sisters, Barbara Mitchell of Oak Park, MI and Chestine Beaton of Elizabethtown, NY. Calling hours will be Sunday, July 24, from 2 to 4 PM at Ricker Funeral Home, 1 Birch Street, Woodsville, NH. A funeral service will be Monday, July 25 at 11 AM at Ricker Funeral Home, with Rev. Dr. Catherine Cook of the South Ryegate Presbyterian Church officiating. Burial will follow at the Groton Village Cemetery, Groton, VT. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Groton Historical Society, c/o Joan Haskell, Groton, VT 05046 or Groton Free Public Library, Groton, VT 05046.

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Visit GHS Web page at Historical Society on <http://www.grotonvt.com/>

Lifetime Membership dues are \$100

Annual dues are \$10 for individuals and \$15 for families

Lifetime members (2 singles & one double)	4
Annual members (52 singles & 15 doubles)	82
Individuals	52
paid 2011+	39
paid 2010	12
paid 2009*	1
Families	15
paid 2011+	10
paid 2010	3
paid 2009*	2

+ eight members have also paid ahead for 2012

* 2011 will end the Grace period for members who last paid dues for the year 2009. If dues are not paid by the end of this year their membership will lapse. (twelve members have elected to receive their newsletter by e-mail saving printing and mailing costs.)

Annual dues are payable each calendar year. The last year your dues were paid is shown on your mailing label. Please let GHS know if there is an error. Those receiving their newsletter by e-mail will be notified when they are in their grace period. If you want to receive your newsletter by e-mail please send request to jwbenzie@mchsi.com

Mr. Glover's Groton is being scanned into pdf format by George Hall as the work Dick Kreis had done could not be retrieved from his computer. George has completed the introduction and first 20 pages for review by the Society. The goal is to have the Groton History available on the Historical Society's web page for people to read.

We are also planning a FAMILY GROUP SHEET for the web page as a form you can type on with your computer to update your families whenever new additions arrive or when you discover more ancestors and relatives. After completing the form you can click on submit to send it to the Groton Historical Society family records file.

The Vermont Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission and the Vermont Dept. of Tourism and Marketing are promoting a four year program celebrating 150 years since the Civil War. For additional information on William Scott in the Civil War see the summer 2006 and summer 2009 GHS Newsletters.

Diane Kreis a member of the Oxbow Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) was one of only seven elected Vice President General of the National Society at the 120th Continental Congress, the annual convention of DAR. Diane is the current State Regent of Vermont. She is the eighth generation to live in the Wells River Valley where her Revolutionary Patriot Jesse Heath settled and lived. Congratulations to Diane!

Dale Brown will be missed by his family, friends, and associates. He was very active in the Historical Society, spearheading the renovation of the Peter Paul House and serving as the Society's Agent in its operation for many years. He researched the history of the house, surveyed its boundaries, and prepared reports on his findings. Other research and reports he did include efforts to rebuild the village dam and the bridge to "Little Italy" that were destroyed by the 1973 flood; history of the village cemetery; Jesse Heath's Powder Horn and the Heath Family; Gloucester County Road; the Proposed Canal in Groton; the Page Chain Company of Groton; and a series of interviews with Veterans of World War II. Shortened versions of these reports have been in earlier issues of this newsletter and can be viewed on the Historical Society's web page which can be easily accessed from the town web site at <http://grotonvt.com>

Groton Historical Society Newsletter
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Groton Historical Society

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