
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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ORVILLE GIBSON'S DEMISE RETOLD



Orville Gibson 1910-1957

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The legend of Orville Gibson's demise nearly six decades ago in Groton's neighboring town of Newbury has recently been retold by retired Vermont Superior Court Judge, Stephen Martin, in his book: *Orville's Revenge: The Anatomy of a Suicide*, published last year. Martin's version of the legend differs from several others, but this is an inherent part of legends, as they are retold over time. Like Groton's legend of the notorious counterfeiter, "Bristol Bill" Warburton, Newbury's legend of "Orville Gibson's demise" will live on in the memories of those who have heard the stories, as fewer and fewer people remain who were actually there.

Judge Martin's version has Gibson, troubled by the breach-of-peace charge against him and upset by the people's

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attitude toward him, staging his own murder for spite. In Martin's story, backed up with evidence from court transcripts and news reports, Gibson left that morning on the last day of 1957 for the bridge with a short length of rope, he spread a bit of silage on the bridge before climbing onto a platform just below the main deck, tied himself up in a manner that was consistent with previous suicides and, rolled himself into the river.

Another version has Orville Gibson roughed up, dragged from his barn, tied up, and tossed into the river. Suspects were Robert "Ozzie" Welch and Frank Carpenter, who had allegedly been spotted near the barn in the early hours that Gibson went missing. They were arrested and tried separately, both being found not guilty.

Some believed men came for Gibson that night, but meant only to scare him. They tossed him in the trunk of a car, and when they opened it, Gibson was dead. Because it was an accident, and because there was such guilt, it was covered up by them and the town's people.

The story starts on Christmas Day, 1957, with Gibson upset. A farmhand named Eri Martin had spilled two milk cans as he wheeled them to the milk house, and Gibson punished him with a severe beating. Gibson was charged with breach of the peace, and served with a summons. Word quickly spread in and around Newbury, and a sheriff's deputy reportedly had suggested that Gibson deserved "a little tar and feathering." An anonymous threatening phone call was made to Gibson's home. On New Year's Eve, Orville Gibson got up about 4 a.m., his usual time, and headed for the barn across the highway from his house. Hours later, his wife went to look for him, but the hired-man working that morning said he hadn't seen him. Orville's wife immediately called the police.

A can that Gibson had used to carry milk was crushed and bent on the ground. Drag marks were in the dirt and silage on the barn floor, leading all the way to the road. Silage similar to that in Gibson's silo and barn was found on the bridge over the

Connecticut River, half a mile away. Police believed someone had roughed up Gibson, dragged him from his barn, and tossed him in the river. The search was underway for his body.

Sometime in the spring of 1958, my brother was visiting our sister and her family, living on the New Hampshire side of the bridge between Newbury, VT and Haverhill, NH, and crossing the bridge on his return trip home he saw what appeared to be a person hanging by the neck on the overhead bridge structure. Both New Hampshire and Vermont State Police were there and it turned out to be a dummy with stuffed overalls, shirt, and barn boots, apparently hung in effigy for Orville Gibson. I remember hearing stories later that some college students did it as a prank, venting their spring fever.

On March 26, 1958 State Police found Gibson's body about seven miles down river. His hands were tied behind his knees, and his ankles were bound with the same rope. An autopsy, performed by the state pathologist, found no water in Gibson's lungs, and concluded he was dead before being in the water. Those findings, however, were later dismissed, but they strengthened the investigators' early suspicions and added to the legend which still remains unsolved.

The legend of Orville Gibson's demise will probably be retold many times in the years to come, but the true story may never be known.

A recent article in the Boston Globe by Nestor Ramos gives additional information about Orville Gibson's demise, and of course Honorable Stephen Martin's book gives a lot more detail about his theory. Martin was a young lawyer at the time of the trials and worked on the defense of those charged with the alleged crime.

Excerpts from
THE CIVIL WAR
(As Recollected by an Ordinary Soldier)
By
Seth N. Eastman M.D. (1843-1913)

In continuing observance of the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Civil War (1863-1865) another excerpt from Dr. S. N. Eastman's story is reprinted here. Past newsletters had excerpts including his enlistment at St. Johnsbury, the battle of Gettysburg, being detailed as a nurse, and the Battle of the Wilderness.

I had been in the army now more than two years and supposed I knew what a battle was, but I must say I had never seen a real fight until I was in the Battle of the Wilderness. We looked through the regiment to see who was left, we found thirteen men of my company were still unhurt. Company 1 of our regiment had only four men left, and the regiment had only 94 muskets that night. All had not been killed, some skedaddled and came back later when the danger was less. This battle so far surpassed anything I had ever seen, so no comparison could be made. I had seen one of my friends wounded and saw the dust fly out of his pant leg as the ball struck him and yet he was with us. I said to him, "You are wounded" and he said "I know it, but I have not had time to look at my wound." We lit a bit of a candle that I happened to have and found that a ball had entered his leg about four inches below his knee joint and had not come out. We probed the wound with the point of a knife blade and could feel the ball. We dug it out with the knife blade and he never left the ranks. He stayed with us all the time and went on the same as ever the next day. His name was Nelson Jewell of East Orange, Vermont.

We had a new recruit in our company by the name of Daniel Craig. He had never been under fire before, and one time when we fell back to form a new line, I was a little behind the main body and I met him going directly toward the enemy. I told him to come with me as the Rebs would get him in a minute if he continued on the way he was going. When he told me he had fired away his ramrod and must go and find it, I told him he could not find it, to let it go and get another. He would not listen to me but kept on, and I saw him walk into the Rebel Ranks. He seemed to be crazy. He was taken to Andersonville, Georgia and starved to death. I never saw him again.

It is not very likely that a private in the ranks could write a correct history of this great battle, when he could not see 6 rods in any direction on account of the underbrush and powder smoke in the woods. And with no wind, the smoke of a battle lays like a blanket on the field. Yet there are many things I remember, as how the ground was strewn with the slain. It is not often that a soldier in any war can say that he has seen heaps of the killed, yet I can say I saw men fallen across each other, and wounded men that had crawled together in groups and died of their wounds or bled to death. We could hear the groans of the wounded in all directions, those of the enemy as well as those of our friends, and the ever present cry for water. Our ambulance men and stretcher bearers were busy that night, and did all they could in caring for the helpless, and by morning, most of the men had been cared for. The surgeons were busy that night, binding up the wounds and operating on the most urgent cases and preparing the disabled for sending to the rear where they could be cared for. At this time more than 1,000 men from the state of Vermont were among the helpless class. They

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were not old and shiftless but, on the contrary, were the very soundest, strong, young men the state of Vermont ever produced.

Sergeant Nathaniel Southland, a very bright, nice young man of our company, was wounded that afternoon in the abdomen. He fell and lay suffering intense pain for several hours, as he was expecting to die. He was supposed to be mortally wounded, a large hole was made in the left side of his abdomen. A ball had struck the shank of his bayonet and, because it was in the scabbard at the time of the incident, broke it into three pieces, making a very ugly wound as much as two inches in diameter, and driving the cloth of his pants into the wound. After dark he was found and, being alive, was brought back to the line where we had lain down for the night. He expected to die and bade us all good-bye. He said the ball was in his body and gave him great pain, and he had only a short time to live. His looks indicated as much. We were doing all we could to make his last moments as comfortable as possible, when he suggested we take off his shoes. We did so, and removing his stocking we found the ball in it. It was very much flattened from striking the bayonet shank. It was about as large as a silver dollar and nearly as thin. He was somewhat surprised to find the ball when he thought he could feel it in his body. He actually smiled and began to feel better in a very short time, and said no more about dying. He rested very well that night and was better in the morning, and was sent to the rear with the other wounded men. He made a good recovery in a very short time and came back and joined the company, well and strong, and he served out his time, never getting hurt again. We used to guy him and laughed at him after he came back, about getting killed, which he took good naturedly and seemed as pleased as anybody to think he was alive and well. He came home and became a good citizen and raised a large family. He

is now dead, having passed to the everlasting camping ground on high, loved and respected by all who knew him.

We had six days rations, and this was the third day, when our load began to get lighter. Also, the sixty rounds of ammunition was nearly all gone and everything we could live without had been thrown away—all extra clothing, blankets, and shelter tents. We were in light marching condition. Our living was also reduced to the least possible amount that could sustain life, no coffee, no bacon or any other meat, because no fire was allowed by which to cook it. We were allowed only hard brisket and water, and not half enough of that. The condition we were in made it difficult to get water that could be drunk. All the brooks and springs within a radius of miles were riled up and polluted by so many men and horses. We had to go a long way for water and then got very poor water. No one can understand how much water it takes to supply an army of two hundred thousand men with their horses and mules. I have seen a good sized creek or brook drunk up dry and so riled up the water could not be used after going miles to find it, and then going two miles further before getting a drink of water. There are many things to think of when supplying a large army on a fighting campaign and give everyone just as little as will keep him alive and on his feet. Our enemies were just as bad off as we were and in the same condition as to food and water. Where we slept, we lay on the bare ground with no covering or shelter, and we continued in this condition, dirty and lousy.

I was willing as darkness fell on the earth the night of May 5th 1864, that all had been peace and quietness compared to this, and yet it was a summer calm compared to what was in store for us the very next day, May 6, 1864.

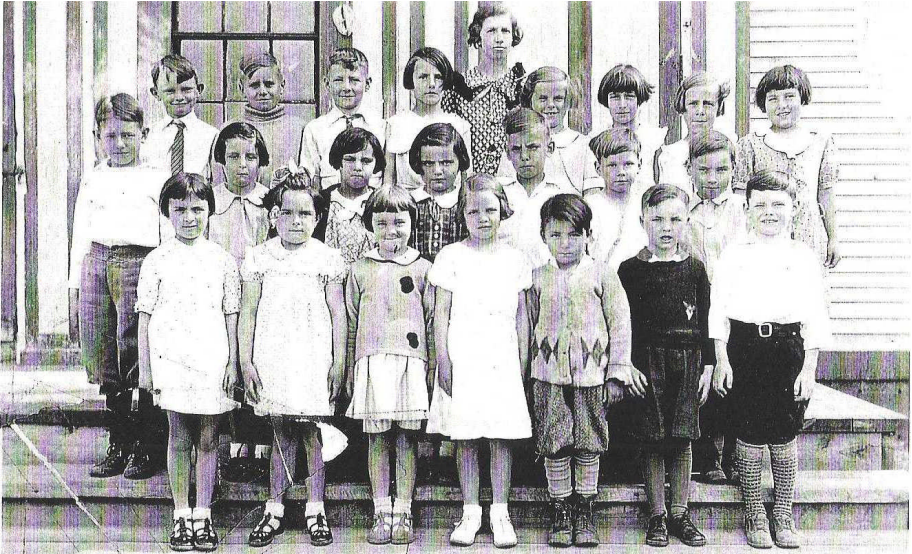
NOTICE: GROTON ALL-CLASS REUNION IN 2016



Groton Community Building site of reunion on 24 June 2016



1934 Graduating Class Groton High School



1934 Grades 1 & 2 in village school with Miss Lord, teacher



Remember sitting at desks like these?

NEW FAMILY NAMES IN 1880 CENSUS

Earlier newsletters listed family names that first appeared in the 1790 to 1870 census records and the names are listed here. (* indicates only census information of family in GHS records)

1790— Abbott, Bailey, Darling, Hosmer, James, Morse, Townshend

1800—Alexander, Batchelder, Emery, Frost, Gary, Gray, Hatch, Heath, Hill, Hooper, Knight, Lund, Macomber, Manchester, Martin, Morrison, Munro, Noyes, *Phelps, Pollard, Remick, Taisey, Thurston, Welch

1810—Annis, Bennett, *Bragden, Carter, Emerson, Fisk, *Floyd, Fuller, Hidden, Hodsdon, *Hogin, Jenkins, *Littlefield, Low, *Mallory, McLaughlin, Nelson, Page, Parker, Paul, Renfrew, Rhodes, Roberts, *Rowlins, Stanley, Vance, Weston, Whitcher

1820—Chase, Coffrin, Cunningham, Downs, Gile, Glover, Goodwin, Higgins, *Huggins, Lyle, Marshall, McClary, Plummer, Richardson, Ricker, Sargent, Welton, Wilmot, Wilson, Wormwood

1830—*Bellamy, Brown, Burnham, Clark, Dodge, Green, Hall, Kimball, *Lathrup, *Lewis, Randall, *Rodger, Silver, Venor

1840—*Brickett, Buchanan, Corruth, Culver, Divoll, Dow, Dunn, *Franklin, *Furwell, Gates, Grant, Hadley, Jones, Joy, Moulton, Orr, Patterson, Peck, Philbrick, Scott, Weld, Wheeler, Whitehill, Wood

1850—Baldwin, Bean, Carpenter, Carrick, Cash, Craig, Cross, Foster, Gilbert, *Hanson, *Hodgman, *Hubbard, Johnston, Leithead, *Marting, *McGen, Miller, *Pane, Seaver, Stewart,

1860—Adams, *Bissell, Burbank, Chamberlin, Clough, *Colby, Crown, Dorr, Eggleston, Flanders, Gilchrist, Graham, Harvey, Hayes, Hood, Hoyt, Jackson, Kidder, Lamphere, Madge, Marsh, McKay, Melvin, Minard, Parker, Pierce, Prior, Stebbins, Waterman.

1870—*Alston, *Barnett, Bliss, *Coates, *Comstock, Corliss, Daniels, Donaldson, Eastman *Forrest, *Fortier, *Frizzell, *Harris, *Hoage, Hopkins, *Hortiair, Judkins, Keenan, *Kellogg, *Kittredge, Lumsden, Mason, McCrillis, Millis, *Moors, Morrill, *Porter, *Sanderson, Smith, Stowell, Thornton, *Wallace, Warden, Webster, Wrinkle.

New Family Names in 1880 Groton Census

(* indicates only census information in GHS Records)

(underlined were in Groton in 1870 living with other families)

***Andrews, Horace**, (age 47), Martha (42), Nellie (8), Charles (7), Harry (5), and Florence (3)

***Bass, Charles E.**, (30), Jennie (24) and Eddie (3).

Bigelow, George M. (1822-1906) m Jennie Hall (1824-1910) and had 11 children; ***John C.** (42), May (31), Edna (13), Anna (11);

***Joseph** (26), Sarah (24), Henry (3), Jane (1)

Blanchard, Lyman, (1853-1937), m 1876 Jennie Heath (1859-1937), Jessie (1878-1973), Lee (1850-1953), Ray (1882-1952), Roy (1882-1926), Bessie (1886-1969), Marion (1889-1975), Ira (1892-1947)

Bondeau, Lyman N. (1838-1893), m Eunice J. Brown (1841-1890), George (1860), Estella (1867), and Lettie (1869).

Boutwell, Henry, (1841-1881), 2m Susan Tillotson (1860-1921), Lillian (1868), Alice (1869), Archie (1878), Ora (1880).

Bowley, George, (1861-1882), m 1879 Hattie Gardner (1860), Emma (1880-1942), George (1882), Henry (1884-1929).

Butterfield, Albert (1845-1919), m Madeline Clark, Annabelle (1913)

Cassady, Alexander (1833-1917) m 1858 Flora Vermuth (1840-1908), Jennie (1860-1938), John (1862-1939), Sara (1864-1937), Flora (1867-1938), James (1870-1950), Harry (1872-1883), Carrie (1877-1967), Harry (1883-1909), Allen (1886-)

***Chapin, John** (31), Lucottie (22)

***Cory, Sarah** (43), Anna (11), Emily (6)

***Cronan, Michael** (37), Bridgette (31)

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***Dean, S. F.** (50), J. M. (41), E. E. (19), Jena (14), Silas (12), Lurie (10), Francis (5), Dexter (2).

***Dickson, William** (24), Elizabeth (19)

***Dussouth, Adolph** (42), Clairance (35), Jane (10), Noah (8), Susan (7), Allen (6)

Eastman, Seth N. (1843-1913), m 1875 Evalona Darling (1853-1903), Cyrus (1877-1900), Bernard (1880-1921)

Fifield, Simeon D. (1830-1910), m 1875 Caroline Bailey (1837-1925), Evelyn (1879-1926), Elwin (1881-1965)

***Fox, George W.** (29), Anna (24), Bell (3)

***Frizzell, Charles H.**(34), Luella(32), Jennie(14), Ellsworth(6), Ida(5)

Gibson, Azro J. (1848-1882), m 1872 Dora Glover (1849-1880), Edwin Orlo (1873-1897), Herbert (1876-); **Albert M.** (1849-1918), m 1877 Ruth E. Brown (1856-1933), Ralph (1877-1938)

***Harris, Nelson** (25), Emma (24), Fred (2), Maud (7 months)

Hayes, William H. (1826-1911) m Fanny Page (1831-1900); **William I.** (1854-1938), m Eliza Page (1860-) Bertha (1876-1942), Nelson (1879-1956)

Holmes, Edwin C. (1835-1903), m 2nd 1866 Charlotte Morrison (1836-1899), Edwin J. (1866-1912), Ida (1871-1935), Effie (1873-1900), Hannah (1880-1970)

***Julian, Esta** (28), Nora (31)

***Kennison, H. H.**(36), Emma (34), Leonard (14), Mary (9), Charles (6), Everett (3)

***Kensington, Oliver** (34), Mira (29), Nellie (10), Mary (7), Fred (4)

Larrow, Fred (1839-), m Adeline (1845-), Fred (1864-), Adelaide (1866-), Loretta (1869-), Emma (1872-), Angeline (1875-), Alex (1878-1932), Charles (1883-)

***Lovell, E. A.** (1823-1903), m Mary E. Keys (1834-1912)

Maple, Frank (1853-), Mary (1850-), Elizabeth (3), Lizzie (2 months)

***McLane, Thomas R.** (34), Emma (26), William J. (4)

***McMan, John**(30), Mary(31), Margaret(9), Michael(8), Martin(4), Mary(1), his mother Mary(60)

***McPhearson, Peter**(27), Maggi(30), Margaret (2), John (4 months)

Meader, John A. (1813-97), m 1843 Ann Page (1816-98)

Nurse, Azro (1830-1896), m Augusta Newton (1839-1915), Lizzie

(10), Minnie (8)

Olney, George (1841-1913).m 1859 Martha Frost (1833-1902),
Ida (1860-1900), Anna (1872-1952)

***Padfield, Fred** (28), Mary (25)

***Pifa, Solfur** (26), Rosana(31), Jane(4), Albert (3), boy (4m)

***Pismuck, Frank** (24), Victoria (17)

Rion, Richard (62) living alone

***Sherburn, J. A.** (58), Meranda (61), Ada (29), Herman (24)

Stevens, Samuel C. (1833-), m 1877 Lydia Dunham (1828-1924),
George (1858-), David (1871-), Georgiana (1878-)

***Stowell, Lavina** (62), Estella Bonda (13) living with her

***Therman, A. J.** (48), Lawry (38), Lutie (14), Clarrie (12), Alvis-
ton (10), Florence (8), Ervin (6)

***Voulett, Victor** (28), Elen (26), Elen (6), Valice (5), Victor (4),
Arthur (3 months)

***Willard, Henry D.**(67), Sarah(60)

Wiley, Ephraim R. (1842-1911), m 1866 Susan Clifford (1845-),
Rossie (1867-1943), Addie (1869-)

By 1880 the railroad had connected Groton with the outside world opening markets for the products of farming, lumbering, and quarrying. These businesses brought many new individuals, as well as families, to Groton. New surnames of individuals in the census, boarding with families or in boarding houses, or work camps were: **Bancroft, Beard, Bonda, Bronson, Corner, Coutia, Devine, Frickey, Gillis, Grimshaw, Good, Gove, Hodge, Holt, Hunter, Jessman, Johnson, Kennerson, Lamoth, Leonard, Lineas, Lynch, Mack, Malone, McAmity, McAuley, McCaskall, McCelia, McCoy, McCrea, McDonald, McGiff, McLanan, McLean, McLoud, McMillers, Mills, Nicholson, Patten, Penock, Rand, Rhobin, Riley, Roben, Robins, Sanborn, Sanders, Sellers, Stuart, Suell, Walker,**

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

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

Annual membership dues are payable for the calendar year
Annual dues are \$10 for individuals and \$15 for families
Lifetime Membership dues are \$100

Your membership status is shown with your mailing address (either **Life** member or the **year** your dues were last paid) please let GHS know if there is an error in our records of your status. Those getting only e-mail copies of the newsletter will be notified when their membership renewal is due.

All members who provide an email address will be sent a copy of the newsletter. If you want to receive only e-mail copies, please send a request to jwbenzie@mchsi.com This will save GHS the cost of printing and mailing. .

The Historical Society now has an e-mail address and a Facebook page, thanks to members Eric Volk and Deborah Jurist. You will now be able to send e-mail messages to the Society at the following address: grotonvthistory@gmail.com. Follow GHS and Like us on Facebook at: [Facebook.com/grotonvthistory](https://www.facebook.com/grotonvthistory). And don't forget to visit our web page, maintained by member Don Smith, by accessing it from our Facebook page or from the Groton Town page at [grotonvt.com](http://www.grotonvt.com). Member Terry Rielly formed a group "I grew up in Groton, Vermont" on Facebook and there are now 252 members, anyone interested in joining can send a request to Terry.

In July the Historical Society and Library co-sponsored a "History through Song Program" at the Groton Bandstand in Veterans Memorial Park which was very well attended by the townspeople and enjoyed by all.

Save the date: **June 24, 2016** for the next All-Classes Reunion of the Groton School Students. The committee is hard at work and plans are being finalized to meet at noon in the Groton Community Building for a luncheon and visiting with classmates and schoolmates. Additional details will be in future newsletters and sent to all Groton students in the committee's record of addresses.

Also save the date for the League of Local Historical Societies & Museums (LLHSM) 62nd Annual Meeting, to be held October 30, 2015 in Burlington.

What some other Historical Societies are doing this summer

Addison: Summer social to remember Chimney Point State Historic Site.

Grafton: Slide show on Indian wars of New England by Michael Tougias.

Huntington: Natural Sketchbook Workshop by Libby Davidson.

Poultney: "Coming Home: Poultney at the close of the Civil War" is theme for 80th annual East Poultney Day celebration.

Shelburne: Exhibit of Vermont Furniture to 1850

Strafford: Exhibit of *The Apotheosis of Washington* in celebration of the ongoing restoration of the U.S. Capitol Dome.
Water Color Painting Workshops by Jennifer Brown.
Vermont and the Civil War by historian Howard Coffin.

Woodstock: Colonial Meeting Houses of New England presented by photographer Paul Wainwright.

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