
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY Newsletter

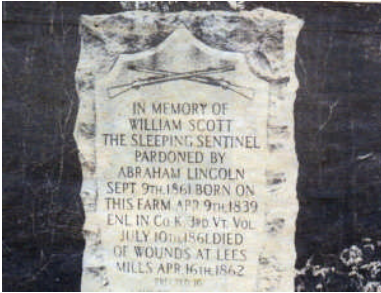
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An attack on the Sleeping Sentinel

The Times Argus July 4, 2018 by PAUL HELLER



Sleeping Sentinel Monument

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CONTENTS	PAGE
Sleeping Sentinel attack	1
Growing up in Groton	6
Wendell Lord Pictures	8
Wendell Lord	11
GHS News	14
GHS Reservation Form	15

The comeuppance of the “know-it-all city feller” at the hands of the plain-spoken yeoman farmer is a staple of American folklore, suggesting that perhaps there is a little populist in us all. It took two Vermonters, Luke Ferriter and Waldo Glover, to rescue the story of the Civil War’s “Sleeping Sentinel” from the predations of a well-known Lincoln biographer. In so doing, they forced a careless scholar to admit the error of his ways, and offer his mea culpa in the pages of The New York Times.

.As Civil War buffs know, William Scott, a 22-year-old son of Groton, enlisted in the Union Army’s Third Vermont Regiment and, a month after joining, found himself in a terrible predicament. The oft-told story, which soon grew to the status of legend, had been published in “Lincoln and the Sleeping

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1) **SLEEPING SENTINEL**

Sentinel” (1909), a book by Vermonter Lucius E. Chittenden, great-grandson of Vermont’s first governor who had served as Lincoln’s register of the treasury in the early days of the Civil War. His account was summarized by the Boston Globe in 1929: “As Chittenden told it, William Scott, a raw soldier boy, was posted on guard one night at Chain Bridge, a dozen miles from Washington. This was the first summer of the war when Washington was constantly in danger of Confederate attack. Young Scott had stood guard in place of a sick friend the night before and could not keep awake two nights running.

He was found asleep, court-martialed, and sentenced to death. His comrades roused themselves in his behalf. One day Chittenden, coming to his office, found it full of Vermont soldiers with an appeal to him as a fellow Vermonter to help save Bill Scott. He took them, he says, to Lincoln.”

Scott, born on a hill farm in Groton in 1839, joined up in July 1861, and found the adaptation to military life harder than expected. Arthur Worthen, also of the Third Regiment, recalled that “Scott couldn’t keep step to a march to save his life, and whoever marched in front of him was greatly annoyed by Scott hitting his heels.”

His photograph suggests a young man, ill at ease in his blue uniform, and his letters home indicate a naive and inexperienced soldier with a rudimentary education but a good heart. President Abraham Lincoln, taking pity on the young man, pardoned him at the last minute. When Scott died nobly on the field of battle some months later, the tale became a fable accruing to the president’s reputation for mercy as well as the honor of the Vermont soldier. The story was immortalized in a poem by Francis Janvier that became a staple of patriotic celebrations, often declaimed in public orations. It was also used as a moralistic tale in school books and was even dramatized for performance on the stage.

Central Vermont travelers know that Route 302 from Montpelier to Wells River is the William Scott Memorial Highway and passes

through Groton. A monument to Scott is on the roadside where the Scott farm was situated.

Eventually, a highly regarded Lincoln biographer declared the whole story a well-meaning fiction, designed with no other purpose than to ennoble the memory of a martyred president. This was in keeping with a modern trend to demythologize American history, one that started with discrediting the legend of young George Washington and the cherry tree.

William Eleazar Barton, born in 1861, was a well-known Lincoln expert. A special collection named for him at the University of Chicago Library notes that he was one of the early 20th century's most prominent writers on the life of Abraham Lincoln.

“Barton grew up in an environment heavily influenced by reverence for Lincoln ... Barton's work as a writer produced a number of denominational manuals for church organization. For the last ten years of his life, however, Barton was best known to the public as a prolific author and lecturer on Abraham Lincoln. His publications about Lincoln included ‘The Soul of Abraham Lincoln’(1920), ‘The Paternity of Abraham Lincoln’ (1920), ‘The Life of Abraham Lincoln’(1925), ‘The Great and Good Man’(1927), ‘The Women Lincoln Loved’(1927), and ‘The Lincoln of the Biographers’ (1930).

“It was Barton's two-volume ‘Life of Abraham Lincoln,’ published in 1925, that challenged the story that was so precious to those from Groton and Vermont. In volume two of Barton's biography he recounts the story of Scott's transgression and Lincoln's pardon and notes that the tale “comes to us on the authority of Honorable L. E. Chittenden:” Barton opines,

“Mr. Chittenden, while in ordinary matters a truthful man, was a very unreliable historian. Not that Mr. Chittenden was the greatest liar in Washington; he was not. But he was one of many men who colored their memories with their imagination until their accounts became wholly unsafe as historical data.”

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3) **SLEEPING SENTINEL**

Barton then disputed most elements of the Chittenden story, asserting that in the course of the conflict, no soldier was ever shot for the offense of sleeping on guard duty, and that “there is no evidence that Lincoln ever knew of the case,” thus refuting the story of Lincoln’s pardon that allowed Scott to give his life honorably a few months later. With this claim, the critical and dramatic elements of the story were dismissed and, consequently, the elements that make the story essential, were mitigated. If Lincoln did not intervene to save Scott, one might conclude, there is little to recommend in the telling of this story. Chittenden’s daughter defended her deceased father, “Doctor Barton will have hard work in killing the story of the Sleeping Sentinel while Vermonters live who knew other sides of this incident than those contained in public records.”

The Vermonters who cherished the story of Scott and Lincoln were outraged when Barton’s biography was published, and what the author had not anticipated was that many who remembered the events of August 1861 were still living. In fact, Luke Ferriter, of Brattleboro, had been an eyewitness to the events and he took umbrage at the historian’s assertions. As reported in an interview in the Boston Post: “Doctor Barton wasn’t there on the scene, but I was there as a member of the firing squad. I was one of the guards picked to shoot Scott, and possibly the only man living who can tell the whole truth about the story, both about Scott’s sleeping on duty and his facing death and getting an eleventh hour pardon from President Lincoln.”

It seems Ferriter had also been on sentry duty the night that Scott was found sleeping, and was witness to the efforts to save the Groton private, as well as being selected for the firing squad on the morning of the execution.

“To our surprise, at nine o’clock the next morning companies of the Third Vermont, the Second Vermont, Thirty-third New York, the Sixth Maine, and a squadron of cavalry were drawn up in a hollow square

for the proceedings of an execution. I was so unlucky as to be drawn as one of the men to do the shooting.

“The prisoner Scott was led out and a white cap pulled over his head. We were all shaking with nervousness at the duty before us when suddenly the adjutant stepped forward and read the pardon.”
“It was the first case of the kind in the war, and it was a great lesson to all of us. We saw to it that we never fell asleep on sentry duty.”

In August 1926, Barton, in an effort to avert further criticism of his biography, took the train to Brattleboro to discuss the matter personally with the veteran of the Third Vermont. They met privately at Ferriter’s Chase Street home. Upon leaving, Barton acknowledged that, in general, Ferriter’s account was correct but refused to waver from his assertion that Lincoln had nothing, whatsoever, to do with the pardon.

In September Waldo Glover, a Groton native, weighed in with an extensive essay in the Sept. 9, 1926 Boston Herald which made a compelling case for the pardon being at the direction of Lincoln.

Finally, Barton was forced to acknowledge that in the course of his research, he missed the documentary evidence that Scott was pardoned at Lincoln’s directive. In a New York Times column, “Barton Made Error in Book on Lincoln,” he grudgingly conceded:
“A few weeks after the book had been published I found that Lincoln did know of the case and gave his verbal approval to General ‘Baldy’ Smith that the numerously signed petition (which the book mentioned) be honored by General McClellan and that a pardon be issued by the latter, stating that the President had requested it.”

Glover was born in 1879 in Groton to a yeoman farmer. For a boy of his time, he was inoculated with the heroic but tragic story of the Sleeping Sentinel. As Glover watched the controversy unfold around the story of Groton’s famous soldier, he vowed to determine the facts of the case and present them in a definitive manner.

(Continued on page 10)

GROWING UP IN GROTON

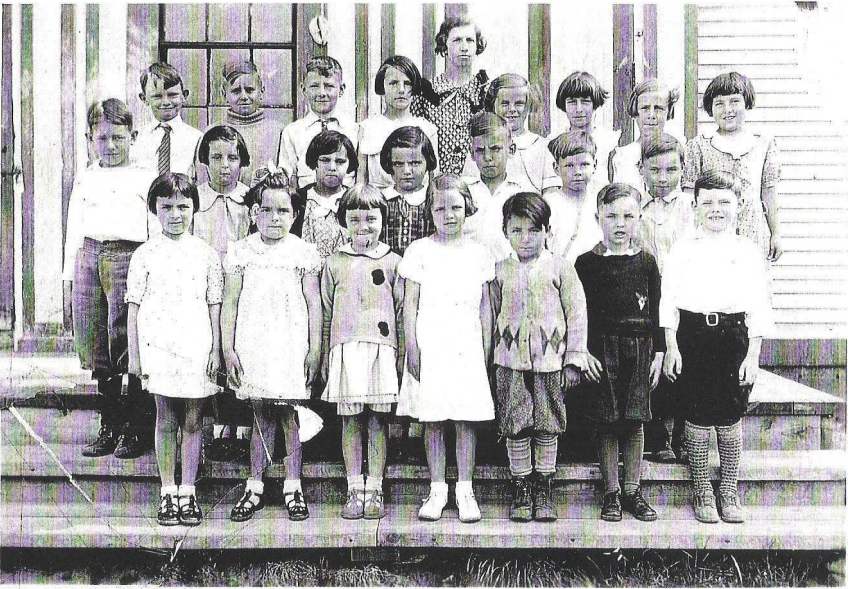
The Village School—1934 to 1946 by Willard Benzie

Being the oldest of my siblings, I was the first to go to school and had no idea of what to expect. My first recollections of school are the long trek up Railroad Street, crossing the tracks and using the sidewalk from the Hatch Block to the iron bridge over the Wells River. By the time I reached Mill Street on the other side of the river my imagination had reached gigantic proportions. I remember as I turned the corner on Mill Street and started up the hill my pace became even slower, I wasn't really excited about my first day of school. Although I had seen the school before and knew how to get there, it sure looked huge when I got my first glimpse of it that morning. I got to school shortly before the bell rang to begin class and my teacher; Miss Lord showed me the desk where I was to sit. Things went a lot better than I had imagined they would and when I returned in the afternoon, after walking home for lunch, it was a faster pace and I got back in time to play some games with my new friends in the school yard before the bell rang for afternoon classes.

Miss Lord married Henry Goodine, the local Barber, in 1934 so the rest of that school year she was Mrs. Goodine, the last year of her teaching. Married women were expected to spend full time raising their family in those years, and were not generally hired until World War II when there was a shortage of men for the civilian labor force because of their serving in the military and in defense industries.

My first year of school is most memorable for the contagious diseases I caught and brought home to my family; measles, chicken pox, mumps, scarlet fever, whooping cough and pneumonia. Carol Ricker was the local Health Officer for Groton and each time I was diagnosed with a disease he came to the house and tacked up a "quarantined" sign to warn visitors and hopefully stop or slow the spread of the disease. Of course with four siblings at home, the disease took several weeks before everyone was over it. My Mother had been a school teacher at Westville for a couple of years before she was married, so she got my assignments from Mrs. Goodine and I was home schooled more during first grade than I spent in the school room. The most inconvenient disease for us was scarlet fever, which required my Father to live with his Aunt Jessie Dugad in the village, as he would have been quarantined if he entered and couldn't leave to carry the mail. He bought us groceries and left them on the back steps and my Mother brought them in after he left. We couldn't go outside the house for eight weeks that time and when Dr. Brady found that all who had the disease were over it and no one

(Continued on page 12)



Above: Mrs. Goodine, teacher with first and second grades 1934-1935.

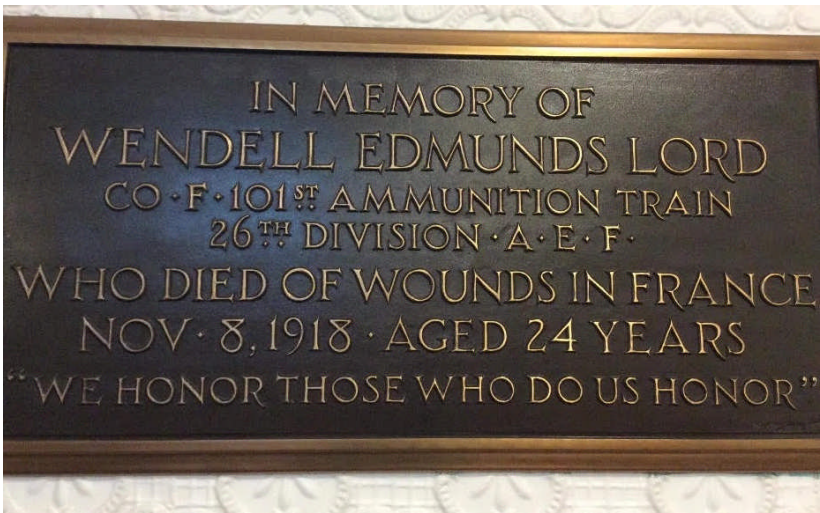
Below: Mr. Cornthwaite, principal and Miss Fitch class advisor with graduating class of Groton High School in 1946: W. Emery, E. Chamberlain, H. Brock, M. McDonald, G. Page, P. Sayers, W. Benzie, M. Darling, B. Brown.



Wendell Edmunds Lord 1894-1918



Wendell Edmunds Lord in his World War I uniform



Plaque in Memory of Wendell Lord in Methodist Church



Janet and Harold Puffer visiting Wendell Lord's Grave at American National Cemetery in Seine, France

(Continued from page 5) Sleeping Sentinel

Glover was a bright lad who attended school at the academy in Peacham. After a brief stint as a school teacher in Groton, he made his way to Boston where he matriculated at Boston University. Armed with a baccalaureate degree he soon became a school superintendent advancing through positions in Groton and Barre and eventually leaving Vermont for an appointment in Winchester, Massachusetts. He always returned to Groton where he maintained a summer home and even volunteered as town historian. Glover perceived the essential error of Barton's research. As he noted in the Boston Herald in 1931,

“Dr. Barton evidently made a mistake in confining his research to the musty files of the War Department in Washington, apparently ignoring many contemporary newspapers, letters and diaries. In the course of the controversy, through further research which he now conducted on a more practical basis, Dr. Barton came to the conclusion that he had been mistaken.”

Glover pointed out that eventually Barton admitted that Lincoln knew about the Scott case and that the official pardon, which had been printed in most newspapers at the time, was a directive of the president. Barton also acknowledged that the “regiments were drawn up as if to witness the execution of Scott.”

In 1936, Glover's research was published by the Vermont Historical Society as a small tome, “Abraham Lincoln and the Sleeping Sentinel of Vermont.” Reading the slender volume today, one can imagine it to be the equivalent of a “slam dunk” in the face of a self-important historical expert. Perhaps the review in The New York Times left a satisfied smile on the face of Glover.

“The author of this book has gone with great care and with endless pains into the examination of the story as a whole and of all its factors. His conclusion which strikes to the very heart of the matter, is that it was Lincoln himself who saved Scott from execution and that thus one of the most famous of the Lincoln stories is proved to be, in its essentials, not a myth, but the truth.”

REMEMBERING WENDELL LORD 1894-1918

One hundred years ago on November 8, 1918 Wendell Lord was killed in action, just three days before the Armistice ending World War I was signed at 11 am on 11/11/1918. Of the 42 people from Groton, listed in Mr. Glover's Groton, who served during World War I, four were wounded and only one was killed, Wendell Lord. He served in Company F of the 101st Ammunition train and is buried in Seine, France in the American National Cemetery.

When the first convention of the Vermont Department of the American Legion was called on October 30, 1919, at Burlington, there were seventy five posts in the state. Groton was Post 8, the Wendell E. Lord Post. Post Commander was S. Burton Heath, who also served as treasurer, and Adjutant was Harvey C. Hendry.

Wendell Edmunds Lord was born 19 August 1894 in Topsham, Orange County Vermont to Charles and Etta (Wilds) Lord, He was the second of five children born to Charles and Etta. The children were: Ralph (1890-1969); Wendell (1894-1918); Merle (1900-lived 17 days); Charles "Ted" (1902-1997); and Alice (1905-1998).

Charles Lord (1864-1944) was born in Orange, VT and married Etta Wilds (1866-1933) who was born in West Topsham, VT. They were married at Orange in 1889 and moved to West Topsham five years later where he started his first newspaper *THE OBSERVER*. The family moved to Groton in 1896 and he printed the first issue of the *GROTON TIMES* in January 1897. The weekly paper reached a circulation of 1,000 by 1900. The family moved to Island pond in 1917, St. Johnsbury in 1919, and back to Groton in 1929. Charles served as Groton town representative to the State Legislature and he built one of the first camps at Groton Pond in 1907.

Ralph operated the steam launch for Rob Miller at Groton pond, transporting supplies and rafts of logs to the Miller Lumber Co. in his early years. Ted developed some of the first ski trails at Stowe with Civilian Conservation Corps crews in the 1930's. Alice was a school teacher, operated Henry's Diner and Variety Store, and was active in the Methodist Church and the Groton Historical Society. *****

(Continued from page 6) **Village School**

else had any symptoms, the Health Officer fumigated the house to kill any of the disease that might still be there. The most serious disease however, was whooping cough. Both me and my sister, Marilyn developed pneumonia with the whooping cough and she died on 5th of January 1935. My maternal grandmother (Ina Peck) also died the last day of January 1935 from cancer. It was a tragic time for our family and especially for my Mother who was home schooling me for about half the year of my first grade.

In second grade my teacher was Mrs. Thelma Donald, who taught the first two grades in primary school. Primary school was in the first room on the right on the ground floor. I remember one time I felt discriminated against because most of the students carried their lunch and had a lot of time to play during lunch hour and I had to spend most of it walking home for lunch and back. I talked my mother into packing me a lunch one day, but I ate it during recess and ended up walking home anyway, and there was no lunch ready for me at home. I did learn to save my lunch for noon after that and carried it to school once in a while, but my younger sister was in first grade so we still walked home for lunch most days.

Third to fifth grades were taught by Mrs. Tillotson in the first room on the left on the ground floor. They were called elementary school. Slate blackboards had been installed in the elementary school classroom in 1933 so the teacher could demonstrate the lessons to the whole class. Students that completed their assignments were chosen to help the teacher clean the blackboards and erasers at the end of the school day. Sometimes when students were asked to complete problems on the blackboard for class instruction, the chalk would screech sending chills down your back. Elementary classes were where I first observed corporal punishment in school. A ruler across the knuckles or the palm of the hand was a physical reminder to keep your hands out of mischief. There was also a dunce stool and cap in the corner, as a reminder to complete your assignments, but I never saw anyone actually sit there.

In elementary school the older classes had a chance to be in the school safety patrol and help students cross the highway in the morning before school and in the afternoon when school let out. If you joined the safety patrol you had to be to school half an hour early and stay half an hour late. At the end of the school year patrol members were given a certificate and recognized at the year-end school picnic.

We called it Junior High School when we went upstairs for the sixth through eighth grades. Mr. Elmer Page was our teacher in the first room to

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

the right at the top of the stairs. I was 11 years old in 1939 in the sixth grade and took music lessons on the clarinet from George McLure to play in McLure's Student Band of Groton, VT. And in June 1940 after school was out I went with the band to the New York World's Fair for two weeks, playing several concerts and marching in a parade that seemed like it was 5 miles long. I was one of the youngest members of the band and had only learned 3 or 4 marches, so Mr. McLure had me hold up the bass drum and march in front of Barbara Brown. Later in the summer we played weekly concerts in Groton, Wells River, and Fairlee. And in the fall we played concerts and performed marching drills at the local fairs.

Junior High was harder for me, especially algebra. I had difficulty understanding how you could add, subtract, multiply or divide letters without knowing a value for them. My whole life I have been amazed at the patience Mr. Page had with me until the light finally clicked and I realized the value was what we were looking for and we were learning the relationships in order to find the value.

Clay marbles were being replaced with glassies in the late thirties and early forties and the glass ones were hard to come by. The glass marbles chipped if they were hit too hard and no one wanted to play with you if you just had chip-pies. All the boys in Junior High had jackknives and the older boys played mumble-peg instead of marbles. We also whittled sticks and in the spring made whistles from willow stems with our jackknives.

Senior High School was 9th through 12th grades and we met each morning in the assembly room at the top of the stairs. After announcements the class bell rang and we went to our assigned class in English, Civics, Geometry, Latin, Chemistry, Physics, World History, etc. Agriculture class was held in the old blacksmith shop behind the Post Office, so we walked to class and back with an occasional stop at White's Store if anyone had a penny or nickel.

In my senior year in 1945-46 I worked for John Goodfellow, who lived on the Plummer farm at the Plummer 5 corners, doing the chores before and after school. He had a couple of cows and thousands of chickens. He had a Terraplane coup, about 1937, which had been converted into a home-made pickup. I drove the pickup to school taking the milk and picking up milk at a couple of farms on the way to deliver to the creamery. After school I picked up grain at the feed store for the cows and chickens to bring back to the farm. I also had use of the pickup in the evenings for school events, like basketball, plays and the prom, which were all held in Morrison Hall.

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Visit GHS on the internet

Email: grotonvthistory@gmail.com

Web page: grotonvthistory.org

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

The summer meetings have been devoted to planning an event for this fall. Banjo Dan Concert is scheduled for September 1 at 5:30 with Barbecued chicken by our Fire Dept. ready at 5 PM before the music begins at the Bandstand. A corn husking contest is planned for the youth at 3:30 and corn-on-the-cob will be available with the barbequed chicken. Cookies, bars and bottled water are also being planned. A reading about the Railroad from Mr. Glover's Groton will be just before the music starts. There will be an opportunity to purchase books, calendars, and memberships from GHS and to sign up as a volunteer.

Plans are also underway by the Groton All-Class Reunion committee for the tri-annual get-together next year. They have prepared a reservation form that is printed on the last page of this newsletter. Please send in your completed form as soon as possible and remind all your classmates.

The New England Historic Genealogical Society has 29 new volumes in Early Vermont Settlers, 1700-1784. Scott Andrew Bartley's study project focuses on heads of families who were living in Vermont during this time period. These new sketches profile individuals from the towns of Sharon and Norwich. Fifteen of the sketches come from Sharon and the rest from Norwich.

Do you eat breakfast, lunch and dinner or breakfast, dinner and supper? Dinner has more to do with the quantity of food that's served, and lunch or supper usually depends on the time of day a light meal is eaten. In rural areas people used to call their midday meal dinner, and supper was the evening meal. Because farmers needed ample fuel to get them through the day, the midday meal was larger (dinner). In the evening, supper was typically a soup or sandwich. A light meal carried to work in your lunch pail to eat at midday usually meant a larger dinner meal in the evening. Breakfast is the morning meal that breaks your overnight fasting.

Groton High School Reunion Reservation Form

Welcome Groton Graduates to our next reunion to be held in 2019! It will be a great time to reminisce and share stories with each other. You can look forward to a super time meeting with each other, a great meal and some fun entertainment. We all are certainly proud of our school years at Groton and this is the perfect opportunity to catch up on the news in each of our lives. We will be hosting the reunion in the Community Building since that was the core base for many of our activities and memories ranging from hot lunch to sports and (ultimately our Graduation). Looking forward to seeing you all there!! Lois Boemig

Date: June 29, 2019, Saturday Place: Groton Community Building

Time: 12:00 noon until 5:00pm Cost: \$17.00/person

Cold Luncheon Entertainment

Name: _____ Year Graduated _____

Spouse: _____ Year Graduated _____

Guests: _____ Amount sent: _____

Current Address: _____

e-mail address _____

Phone number: _____

Please make your check payable to :Groton Community Club

And send to: Peter Lyon, 848 West Shore Drive, Groton, VT 05046

This is the only notice you will receive, so please complete and return it, as soon as possible, but no later than June 10, 2019.

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