
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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Private William Scott 1839-1862

GROTON CHARTER

The Governor Council, General Assembly of the State of Vermont: To all people to whom these presents shall come, Greetings: Know ye that whereas, Lieutenant Thomas Butterfield and his associates have, by petition requested a grant of a tract of unappropriated land within this State in order for settling a new plantation to be erected into a township; we have therefore thought fit for the due encouragement of their laudable designs and for other valuable causes and considerations as hereunto moving: and do by these presents in the name and by the authority of the Freeman of the State of Vermont, give and grant the tract of land hereafter described and bound unto the said Lieut. Thomas Butterfield and the several persons hereafter named his

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associates in equal shares viz. Nathaniel Douglas Jun., Aaron Hasford, Joseph Haskell, Gideon Spencer, Asa Douglas, Thomas Talman, Ebenezer Talman, Thomas Johnson Jun., Joseph Fairbanks, John Payne Jun., Eliza King, Ebenezer Curtis, Ezra Fellows, Joshua Stanton, Daniel McArthur, Benjamin Walswerth, John Stewart, Nehemiah Lovewell, Nehemiah Lovewell Jun., James Whitlaw, Eliza Galusha, Noah Chittenden, Shadrach Hathaway, Jedediah Hide, Lemuel Bradley, Asa Burnham, Isaac Andrus, Isaac Andrus Jun., Roswell Andrus, Ethan Allen, Joshua Webb, John Sibley, John Knickerbacor, Leonard Robinson, John C. Williams, Benjamin Sumner, John Sill, Samuel Lathrop, Samuel Elmore, Caleb Smith, Thomas Jewett, Jonathan Fassett, John Fassett Jun., Samuel Robinson, Benjamin Fay, Abraham Vandenburg, Levinus Vandenburg, William Dyre, Peter Wright, Jonathan Child, Nathaniel Tisdale, Payne, Heber Allen, Paul Dewey, David Bebee Jun., Eliakin Stoddard, Moses Robinson, David Fassett, David Beebe, Robard Johnson, Samuel Comstock, Jabez Bingham, Mabel Mitchel, Ebenezer Wallis, Robert Lovewell, Sarah Chittenden, James Abbott, Polly Fay, Benjamin Fay, Joseph Fay two rights or equal eighty one parts: John strong, John Taplin, Jonathan Arnold, Lyman Potter, John Johnstone Jun., Oliver Ashley, Jonathan Hun, Mary Bingham and Thomas Chittenden (Eph Bailey has the right of Thomas Chittenden) which together with the five following rights or equal shares reserved to the several publick uses in manner following include the whole of said tract or township viz: one right for the use of a seminary or College, one right for the use of County Grammar Schools, throughout the State. One right for the first settled Minister of the Gospel in said Township forever. One right for the support of the Minister in said Town and one right for the support of an English School or Schools in said town; which tract of land hereby given and granted as aforesaid is bounded and described as viz: Beginning at a spruce tree marked Peacham Corner 1786 being the southwestern corner of said Peacham and running South 68 degrees East six miles in the southerly line of Peacham to the southeasterly corner thereof which is also the northwesterly corner of Ryegate being a beech stump and stands twenty one links south from a maple tree, marked Ryegate

northwest corner 1786. Thence southerly in the westerly lines of Ryegate and Newbury to the northwesterly corner of Topsham. Then westerly in the northerly lines of Topsham and Orange so far that extending a strait line northwardly to the bounds began at will contain twenty eight thousand acres; and that the same be and hereby is incorporated into a Township by the name of Groton and the inhabitants that do or shall hereafter inhabit said Township are declared to be enfranchised and entitled to all the privileges and immunities which the inhabitants of other towns in this State do and ought by the Laws and Constitution thereof to exercise and enjoy. To have and to hold the said granted permission as above expressed with all the privileges and appurtenances there unto belonging or appertaining unto them and their respective heirs and assigns forever; Upon the following conditions and reservations, viz. That each Proprietor in the Town of Groton aforesaid his heirs or assigns shall plant and cultivate five acres of land and build a house at least 18 feet square on the floor or have one family settled on each respective right within the term of three years next after the bounds of said Township shall be fully ascertained and known, on penalty of the forfeiture of each respective right or share of land in said Township not so improved or settled and the same to revert to the Freemen of this State to be by their representative regranted to such persons as shall appear to settle and cultivate the same.

In testimony whereof we have hereunto caused the seal of this State to be affixed this 20 day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.

Thomas Chittenden

By His Excellency's Command

Joseph Fay, Secy.

Sleeping on Duty

Dennis A. Hermann

Unknown to Captain Thomas F. House, Company H, 3rd Regiment Vermont Volunteer Infantry, he was to be the catalyst for a very unique series of events, reaching the highest level of the nation.

Protection of Washington City was paramount early in the Civil War, as well as, throughout the war. After all, 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 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.



Washington City Area and Location of Chain Bridge

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5) **SLEEPING ON DUTY**

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. In addition, near the bridgehead was the reservoir that provided water to the entire Washington area.

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. Smith, as well as, other Generals, both North and South, felt the most severe of punishment, death, should be exacted to those who violated their duty. It not only provided justice, but was thought to be a major deterrent of future violations. This would protect the soldiers, army and the nation and hasten the defeat of the enemy.

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 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." (Vermont Historical Society)

Twelve officers were detailed for the court. Col. Hyde, Lt. Col. Veasey, Major Seaver and Capt. Blanchard all from the 3rd Vermont Infantry served as members of the court. Other members consisted of officers from 2nd Vermont, 33rd New York, 6th Maine, New York Artillery and Cavalry. Col. Hyde served as the President of the Court.

The following is the transcript of the trial of William Scott September 3rd, 1861. (Courtesy Vermont Historical Society)

Present: All members of the court. “The Judge Advocate also present and proceeded to trial of Private William Scott Co. 3d Vermont Vol.

The accused was brought before the court and order convening it was read to him. He was then asked if he objected to any member of the detail to which he replied “no”.

The court was then duly sworn by the Judge Advocate and the Judge Advocate by the President in presence of the accused.

Private William Scott Co, K, 3d Ver. Vols. was then arraigned on the following charges and specifications –

CHARGE

Violation of the 46th Article of War.

SPECIFICATION

In this that he, Private Wm. Scott Co. K, 3rd Vt. Vols. being a regularly posted sentinel, did go to sleep upon his post, this at the hour between three & four a.m. on the 31st day of August, 1861, while on picket guard near Camp Lyon, D.C.

To which the Prisoner pleaded as follows:

To the Specification ----- Not Guilty

To the charge ----- Not Guilty

Captain Thomas F. House, 3d Ver. Vol a witness for the prosecution being duly sworn, testified as follows:

“On the 30th of August last I was Officer of the Grand Guard which went up the Potomac, and on the morning of the 31st I started about three o’clock to make my rounds; and when I came to the post where Scott and his two comrades were stationed, I found them all asleep. The prisoner was a member of my Guard and regularly posted.”

(Continued on page 10)

OLD AND NEW MEETING PLACES IN 20TH CENTURY GROTON



Morrison Hall about 1920—1950



Community Building 1950—present



Post Office 1926-1958



Post Office 1958-present

(Continued from page 7) **SLEEPING ON DUTY**

Question by the Prisoner – “What did I say to you after you waked me up?”

Answer – “When I found them all asleep, I tried to find out whose duty it was to have been awake at the time. They all said it was Scott’s, and Scott also admitted it was his duty.”

Question by a Member of the Court – “Did you positively wake him, and know it was his guard?”

Answer – “Yes.”

“The prosecution here closed. The prisoner having no witness to produce and no defense to make the Court closed. After mature deliberation on the evidence the Court find the accused as follows:

Of the Specification – Guilty ---- Of the Charge – Guilty

And the Court does sentence him, Pvt. William Scott, Co. K, 3d Regt. Vermont Volunteers “To be shot to death” – two thirds of the members voted for this sentence.

EDW McK. Hudson
Capt., 14th Inf.,
Judge Advocate

B.N. Hyde
Col. 3d Regt. Vt. V.
President of the Court

“The proceedings in the forgoing case, having been laid before the Maj. General commanding (McClellan) in accordance with the 65th Article of War, the following are the orders thereon.

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.

For the next few days Scott's fellow soldiers in the 3rd Vermont Infantry and the Brigade had little time to think. Trees had to be dropped, the area cleared for the camp, entrenching and building fortifications, including a fort for the protection of the troops, Chain Bridge and Washington.

Soldiers and officers of the 3rd Vermont had great sympathy for Scott, but what could they do to help him?

TO BE CONTINUED

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IN MEMORIAM of SOCIETY MEMBERS

Feb 28, 2017—Florence “Betty” Bayless Dudley, 100

Sep 12, 2017—June Dickey Jorgensen, 85

Oct 25, 2017—Durwood French, 84

Mar 25, 2018—Lyle Edwards, 90

Nov 3, 2018—Allen Gandin, 89

Jan 3, 2019—Kent Haskell, 87

Morrison Hall

J. Willard Benzie

Growing up in Groton in the 1930's and 40's Morrison Hall was the place where social activities and Town Meetings were held. School plays, basketball games, and almost any activity that required room for 50 or more people was held in Morrison Hall, located on the north side of the wells river next door to the White Brother's Creamery which was by the bridge on Powder Spring road.

I don't know when Harry Morrison (1886-1936) acquired the building, but in the late 1930's and 1940's we had to get the key from his widow, Bessie (Blanchard) Morrison (1886-1969), who lived in the house between Burt Brown's Meat Market and Ed Ricker's house on the south side of Main Street, William Scott Memorial Highway.

The furnace was in the ground floor of the building and we had to build a fire early to heat the hall on the top floor for an evening event. Entrance to the hall was up a covered stairway on the west end of the building. An iron "fire escape" was on the north side of the building, but I never recall anyone using it. Tickets for events like basketball games and school plays were sold at the top of the covered stairway.

A stage with dressing rooms was on the east end of the hall and the only heat register was located on the short wall below the stage floor. Basketball hoops were above the stage and at the west end of the hall. I don't remember the dimensions, but they were far short of a regulation basketball court today. The time keepers and scorers sat on the stage with some of the fans, but most fans stood along the south and north walls.

We played many games here in my high school years, but the one I remember the most, was against Concord, VT. The winner would go on to play in the State Tournament for small schools, the closest we ever came while I was in school. The game went into three overtimes and we lost 6 to 9, but it was a valiant defensive effort by both teams. Since then basketball strategy has changed to an offensive game and just try to out score your opponent.

After the Community Building was completed in 1948 it became the cultural center for Groton where basketball games, Town Meetings, and other gatherings were held.

JAMES SHIELDS 1857-1940

Carol Welch Shields

It was on the eastern slope of Harvey's then, in Mosquitoville, a picturesque little farming community with mailbox after mailbox all bearing one name, "Shields".

James Shields, a sturdy Scotsman with piercing blue eyes and a substantial mustache purchased the original farm from Ed Manchester in 1885 and there with his bride, Martha Morrison settled down to raise their family of eleven.

Much of the 120 acres still had to be cleared, but the hard work and long hours of toil only served to strengthen the strong family ties. There was never any thought of moving a daughter Verna recalled, "It was home and we all loved it."

Their lives were bound up in the farm, the nearby one-room school, and at the bottom of the long hill, the unadorned Walter Harvey Meetinghouse.

Elwyn was the first to leave home. For months he had coveted the prim maple-shaded farmhouse next door and an attractively shy Peacham girl, Annie Killiam. By the summer of 1922, he possessed both.

The nostalgia of Harvey's tugged at Virgil's heartstrings too. In April 1938, unable to resist any longer, he and Agnes Wilson and their family of seven moved to the next farm down the road, with its breathtaking view of the three ponds in the valley far below backdropped by the distant White Mountains.

After James died in 1940, Ellsworth the youngest son, took over the family farm; like his Dad before him thinking the home he was born in, a perfect place to spend a lifetime with Evelyn Macombie and their eight offspring.

Olive too, felt the homeward tug, and with a teacher's instinct, a splash of red and yellow, a big bow window, and lots of daylilies, the long-abandoned schoolhouse became a perfect summer retirement cottage.

I first visited the Shields neighborhood in 1960 and was captivated by the tranquil farmlands, its green pastures dissected by dusty gravel roads; impressed by the warmth and charm of the friendly Scottish farm folks.

It was a lasting impression, one that added five more great-grandchildren to James Shields family tree.

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Visit GHS on the Internet

Email: grotonvthistory@gmail.com

Webpage: grotonvthistory.org

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

Martin Magoun of Topsham Vermont, whose business is called "Legal Beagle" has put in many volunteer hours working on creating a title history for the Peter Paul House. This is like a title search but in much greater depth. It is more like a genealogy for a property. So far he has followed the deeds back to 1890 and made us copies for our records. We have learned some very interesting facts about our historic house. For instance, at one point approximately one half the house was left to one sibling and the other half was left to another sibling. The house was transferred, from one owner to the next for the sum of \$1.00 over and over again right up until the time the Groton Historical Society bought it in 1988. When the research is complete we will share the full story.

An earlier history of the Peter Paul House and property was prepared by Dale Brown and published in the Winter and Spring issues of the GHS Newsletters in 2012. They can be read online at grotonvthistory.org by clicking on the Newsletter page.

All-Classes reunion of Groton High School students is scheduled for June 29, 2019 at the Groton Community Building starting at 11 am with a luncheon and visiting until 5 pm. Be sure to spread the word to all former students of Groton High School. Check the fall 2018 newsletter for a reservation form to complete and send with \$17 to Peter Lyon, 848 West Shore Drive, Groton, VT 05046 before June 10, 2019.

Sixteen or more former students died between the 2013 and 2016 reunions, and at least 27 have died since our 2016 get-together. Here is a list of those we know about that have passed away:

IN MEMORIAM of GHS ALUMNI

- Mar 2013—Chestine Brown Beaton, 88
Nov 20, 2013—Harvey Hatch, 68
Nov 24, 2013—Patricia Bain Haskell, 81
Apr 23, 2013—Casper Lyford, 93
Jun 16, 2013—Frances Frost Tripp, 79
Jan 21, 2014—Russell Page, 93
Sep 11, 2014—Grover Smith, 88
Sep 12, 2014—Martha Foster Rogers, 93
Nov 30, 2014—Eugene Puffer, 85
Dec 7, 2014—Christie Murray Hersey, 82
Dec 13, 2014—Melvin Benzie, 84
Jan 11, 2015—Dorothy Pierce Main, 98
May 25, 2015—Evelyn Frost Ricker, 88
Jul 13, 2015—Ercil Davis, 95
Jan 28, 2016—Arthur Shields, 78
Apr 27, 2016—Mildred Frost Thompson, 87
- Nov 26, 2016—Pearl Sayers Whitehill, 89
Nov 29, 2016—Anita Vance Klucking, 83
Dec 29, 2016—Gary Mason, 68
Jan 25, 2017—Sharon Frost Bailey, 72
Apr 28, 2017—Frederick Dana, 92
May 28, 2017—Creston Ruitter, 77
Sep 2017—Katharine Ricker Benoit, 88
Sep 12, 2017—June Dickey Jorgensen, 85
Oct 24, 2017—Milton Lamberton, 84
Oct 25, 2017—Durwood French, 84
Jan 5, 2018—Evelyn Whitehill Shields, 82
Jan 16, 2018—Ruth Eastman Hatch, 68
Feb 25, 2018—Pauline McLam Rouhan, 98
Mar 23, 2018—Helen Vance MacDonald, 86
Mar 25, 2018—Lyle Edwards, 90
Mar 29, 2018—Merrill Legare, 77
Jun 1, 2018—Henry Sanville, 82
Jun 27, 2018—Lona Gandin Gray, 86
Aug 1, 2018—Leverett Welch, 85
Aug 6, 2018—Clifford Ashford, 86
Aug 28, 2018—Carol Dickey Blanchard, age 85
Sep 1, 2018—Calvin Frost, 93
Sep 20, 2018—James Crown, 84
Sep 30, 2018—Beverly Bain Hatch, 82
Nov 3, 2018—Allen Gandin, 89
Dec 30, 2018—Pearle Young Goodwin, 94
Jan 3, 2019—Kent Haskell, 87

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