
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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PLYMOUTH COLONY



Pilgrims came to America in 1620 and established the Plymouth Colony

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Plans to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrims voyage to America and establishment of Plymouth Colony are now facing problems remindful of those the Pilgrims faced 400 years ago.

The covid-19 pandemic has cancelled the opening ceremonies and has threatened to postpone many of the other activities until next year.

Only 53 of the 102 passengers and crew survived the first winter on board the Mayflower where disease was rampant. And the voyage itself was delayed due to severe leaking of the sister ship, Speedwell, forcing passengers to crowd onto the Mayflower.

The Mayflower returned to England in April 1621 after the Pilgrims established Plymouth Colony as the first permanent settlement in New England.

An *Agreement Between the Settlers of New Plymouth*, now called the Mayflower Compact, was signed by 41 of the colonists.

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On December 21, 1620, the first landing party arrived at the site of Plymouth after unsuccessfully looking for a site at Provincetown on Cape Cod. Plans to build houses, however, were delayed by bad weather until December 23. As the building progressed, 20 men always remained ashore for security purposes and the rest of the work crews returned each night to the Mayflower. Women, children, and the infirm remained on board the Mayflower, and many had not left the ship for six months.

The first structure was a common house of wattle and daub, and it took two weeks to complete in the harsh New England winter. In the following weeks, the rest of the settlement slowly took shape. The living and working structures were built on the relatively flat top of Cole's Hill, and a wooden platform was constructed atop nearby Fort Hill to support the cannon that would defend the settlement.

During the winter, the Mayflower colonists suffered greatly from lack of shelter, diseases such as scurvy, and general conditions onboard ship. Many of the men were too infirm to work; 45 of the pilgrims died and were buried on Cole's Hill. Only seven residences and four common houses were constructed during the first winter out of a planned 19. By the end of January, enough of the settlement had been built to begin unloading provisions from the Mayflower.

The men of the settlement organized themselves into military orders in mid-February, after several tense encounters with local Indians, and Myles Standish was designated as the commanding officer. By the end of the month, five cannons had been defensively positioned on Fort Hill. John Carver was elected governor to replace Governor Martin.

On March 16, 1621, the first formal contact occurred with the Indians. Samoset was an Abenaki sagamore who was originally from Pemaquid Point in Maine. He had learned some English from fishermen and trappers in Maine, and he walked boldly into the midst of the settlement and proclaimed, "Welcome, Englishmen!" It was at this meeting the Pilgrims learned how the previous residents of Pawtuxet had died of an epidemic. They also

learned about an important Indian leader in the area, Wampanoag Chief Massasoit, and about Squanto (Tisquantum) who was the sole survivor from Pawtuxet. Squanto had spent time in Europe and spoke English quite well. Samoset spent the night in Plymouth and agreed to arrange a meeting with some of Massasoit's men.

Massasoit and Squanto were apprehensive about the Pilgrims, as several men of the Wampanoag tribe had been killed by English sailors. He also knew that the Pilgrims had taken some corn stores earlier at Provincetown.

Squanto himself had been abducted in 1614 by English explorer Thomas Hunt and spent five years in Europe, first as a slave for Spanish monks, then as a freeman in England. He had returned to New England in 1619, as a guide for explorer Capt. Robert Gorges, but Massasoit and his men had massacred the ship's crew and taken Squanto.

Samoset returned to Plymouth March 22 with a delegation from Massasoit including Squanto; Massasoit joined them shortly after, and established a formal treaty of peace after exchanging gifts with Governor Carver. This treaty ensured that neither people would bring harm to the other, that Massasoit would send his allies to make peaceful negotiations with Plymouth, and they would come to each other's aid in a time of war.

The colony grew slowly with migration from England. In 1624 Plymouth Colony's population was 124. By 1637 it was 549. And by 1643 settlers had founded nine more towns. But compared to its neighbor Massachusetts Bay Colony, Plymouth grew modestly, reaching only 7,000 by 1691 when it was merged with surrounding Colonies to form the Province of Massachusetts Bay.

Plymouth has a special role in American history. Settlers were fleeing religious persecution and searching for a place to worship freely. Many people and events of Plymouth Colony are part of American folklore, including the tradition of Thanksgiving and the monument of Plymouth Rock.

END OF WORLD WAR II 75 YEARS AGO

World War II started in 1939 and ended with surrender of the Axis powers in 1945. For five years and eight months the war had been raging in Europe beginning with Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. By the summer of 1941, dictator Adolf Hitler's German military had conquered or subdued almost all of Europe from Spain's eastern border to the western border of the USSR. Italy, ruled by Mussolini, joined Germany, and the two nations fought against the British (and later the Americans) in North Africa and Italy.

While still at war with Great Britain, Hitler invaded the USSR on June 22, 1941, and on December 11, 1941 he declared war on the United States, to honor a mutual support pact he had signed with Imperial Japan. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941 brought the U. S. into the conflict. The "European War" and the "Asian War" with Japan in the Southwest Pacific were now a global conflict — the Second World War. When the U. S. entered the war, they chose a "Europe first" strategy: prioritize defeating the Germans, Italians, and supporters first before concentrating on the war in the Pacific.

V-E Day (Victory in Europe) May 8, 1945 when Germany surrendered unconditionally, marked a major milestone for the Allied Forces but did not end the war, as Allied governments cautioned their citizens, and attention turned to finishing the war against Imperial Japan.

President Harry Truman announced victory in Europe to the American people and declared Sunday, May 13, Mother's Day, a day of prayer for thanksgiving. His announcement said, "Our rejoicing is sobered and subdued by a supreme consciousness of the terrible price we have paid to rid the world of Hitler and his evil band. Let us not forget, my fellow Americans, the sorrow and the heartache which today abide in the homes of so many of our neighbors — neighbors whose most priceless possession has been rendered as a sacrifice to redeem our liberty ... If I could give you a single watchword for the

coming months, that word is work, work, and more work. We must work to finish the war. Our victory is only half over.”

Across the country, however, joyous celebrations broke out. Thousands gathered in New York’s Times Square. New Orleans took on the appearance of Mardi Gras, with people dancing in the streets. Church bells rang out the glorious news in major cities and small towns including Groton.

On August 6 and 9, 1945, the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, respectively. August 9, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. Japan’s government communicated its intention to surrender on August 10 under terms of the Potsdam Declaration. The formal signing of the Japanese Surrender was on board the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945, and it was declared V-J Day (Victory over Japan) by President Truman.

Although September 2 is the designated "V-J Day" in the United States, the event is now recognized as an official holiday only in the state of Rhode Island, where it’s official name is "Victory Day" observed on the second Monday of August. There were several attempts in the 1980s and 1990s to eliminate or rename the holiday claiming it is discriminatory

V-J Day was commemorated in the United States every year on September 2, beginning in 1948 and continuing until 1975, when Arkansas became the last state (other than Rhode Island) to eliminate the holiday. The reason usually given for abolishing V-J Day in every state other than Rhode Island was economic. There was even a debate about abolishing V-J Day in Rhode Island. Since 1975, it has not been commemorated in any other state

Although the Axis powers had all surrendered, United States Congress did not officially declare the war over until October 5, 1946. During World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union fought together as allies against the Axis powers. However, the relationship between the two nations was tense. Americans had long distrusted Soviet communism and were concerned about the Russian leader

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Joseph Stalin's tyrannical rule of his own country. The Soviets resented the Americans' not accepting them as a legitimate member of the international community since its establishment in 1917 with the Bolshevik revolution; as well as America's delayed entry into World War II, which resulted in the deaths of tens of millions of Russians. After World War II ended, these grievances grew into an overwhelming sense of mutual distrust and enmity.

Occupation of Germany was divided three ways with USSR, England and USA each controlling a portion, even the capitol city Berlin located in the eastern sector occupied by USSR was divided. This isolation resulted in the Berlin Airlift to provide necessary supplies to the people of West Berlin. And in the Pacific, Korea, freed from Japanese occupation, became divided with communist control of the North and Allied forces controlling the South.

Many American officials thought the best defense against the Soviet's expansion of communism was a "containment" strategy. This turned into the Cold War with a nuclear arms race of the 1950's and citizens building fall-out shelters stocked with survival supplies. It almost became a full scale war when the USSR attempted to install missiles in Cuba resulting in the Cuban missile crisis, and continued with the space race of the 1960's until Soviet influence in Eastern Europe began to fade after America's successful moon landings.

By 1989, many communist states under USSR influence had established non-communist governments and in November the Berlin Wall—the most visible symbol of the Cold War—was destroyed, two years after President Reagan had challenged the Soviet premier in a speech at Brandenburg Gate in Berlin: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall." And by 1991, the USSR itself had broken up into separate countries. The Cold War was over.

DISEASE OUTBREAKS IN U. S.

COVID-19 pandemic reached U. S. in late January 2020 and reminds us of past disease outbreaks in our history. Diseases existed during hunter-gatherer days, but when agrarian communities began 10,000 years ago disease outbreaks like. Malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, influenza, smallpox, and others appeared. As civilization advanced, building cities and trade routes to connect them, and waging wars against them, the faster epidemics and pandemics spread.

One-third of the world's population died when the bubonic plague spread west with trade caravans from Asia in 1347 A.D. The plague reached Messina, Italy and went rapidly throughout Europe. England and France incapacitated by it, agreed to end their war. The British feudal system collapsed when economic circumstances and demographics changed. Vikings, too weakened to battle the natives in Greenland, ended their exploration of North America.

Spanish arrival in the Caribbean brought with them contagious diseases infecting the natives. Indigenous people had no immunity suffering greatly and up to 90 percent died throughout North and South America.

In 1520, the Aztec Empire was destroyed by a smallpox infection. The disease killed many and incapacitated others, so they could not resist Spanish colonizers, and farmers were unable to grow crops. Research in 2019 speculated deaths of 56 million Native Americans in the 16th and 17th centuries, largely by disease, altered Earth's climate, as abandoned cropland reforested it removed more carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere resulting in cooling.

Wikipedia lists numerous outbreaks of diseases in the U. S. and the World including 29 before the 1616-20 epidemic destroying the Wampanoag Indian settlement at Pawtuxet, before the pilgrims arrived to build Plymouth Colony; 119 between 1620 and the 1918-20 Spanish Flu pandemic; and 89 between the Spanish flu pandemic and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. The following outbreaks are examples with available estimated deaths:

1616-20 – epidemic devastated the Wampanoag village of Pawtuxet (now in RI)

1633 & 1677 – Smallpox epidemics in Massachusetts up to 2,000 died

1693-1702 – Yellow fever epidemics— Boston to Charleston 4,100+ died

1735-41 – Diphtheria epidemic in Northeast deaths 20 thousand

1793-94 – Philadelphia Yellow fever epidemic deaths 5+ thousand

1837-38 – Great Plains Smallpox epidemic deaths 17+ thousand

1861-65 – Typhoid fever epidemic U. S. deaths 80 thousand

1889-90 – Influenza pandemic Worldwide deaths 1 million

1916-52 – Polio (Poliomyelitis) U. S. deaths 8 thousand

1918-20 – Spanish flu pandemic (H1N1) Worldwide deaths 17 – 100 million

1957-58 – Asian flu pandemic (H2N2) Worldwide deaths 1 - 4 Million

1981-?? - HIV/AIDS pandemic Worldwide deaths 32+ million up to 2018

2017-18 – U. S. Seasonal influenza deaths 46 to 80 thousand.

2019-?? – COVID-19 pandemic U. S. deaths 91,664 up to 20 May 2020

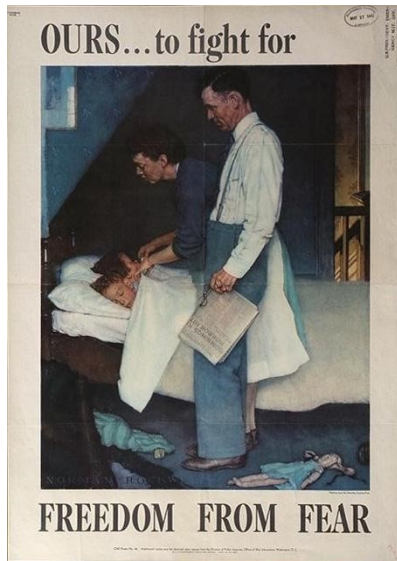
PICTURES



Ellis Roberts Welch 1901-1916



WW II Victory Medal



World War II Posters picturing Norman Rockwell's illustrations of Freedoms in President FDR's Four Freedom's speech not in the Constitution. Other two in the Constitution are freedom of Speech/assembly and freedom of Worship.



Wigwam and Wampanoag guide at the living history museum in Plymouth, MA . Without the help of these local Indians, the Pilgrims probably would not have survived.



1920 U. S. stamp celebrating the 300th anniversary of Mayflower Compact.



Plymouth Plantation is a living history museum in Plymouth, MA founded in 1947. It replicates the original settlement of the Plymouth Colony established in the 17th century by the English colonists known as the Pilgrims. *Wikipedia*

ELLIS ROBERTS WELCH 1901-1916

Groton, Vermont
By Carol Welch Shields

My Uncle Ellis was born in Groton, Vermont November 27, 1901, the middle child of Jacob Hooper and Evalona (Emery) Welch. Five-year-old Etta Hooper Welch was there to greet him: he would have to wait five more years to see his little brother, Clarence Douglas Welch who likewise was born at home April 15, 1906, tipping those handheld scales at fourteen pounds.

Grandma Evalona, "Lonnie" as she was affectionately called, was a cougar, just shy of twenty-three when she wed big handsome "Jake" just before he turned twenty. He was born on February 2, 1895. Whether they were still in their first home near the top of Goodfellow Hill just down from Levi Pond and across from Grandfather Lebbeus' plank house, where Jacob grew up, or by that time had moved to the farm further down that road nearer the town of Groton, I do not know. I do know Etta, Ellis and Clarence spent most of their growing up years on the farm.

Ellis knew well and so loved his Grandpa Lebbeus with his long well-groomed beard and kindly eyes. "The Descendants of Edmund and Jonathan Welch" book has Lebbeus' birthdate, Sept 13, 1832. Records at the old Groton Village Cemetery have his death date, 1932. Lebbeus would have been 69 when Ellis was born, and he outlived his treasured grandson by 16 years. Ellis' grandmother Martha (Page) Welch outlived Ellis by only a year. I have a letter dated October 7, 1917 that my Dad wrote to his sister, Etta, by then married to Bob McLam White, telling her that "Grandmother Welch" had died. His maternal grandfather Timothy Emery, the 3rd, age 56 when Ellis was born, lived to age 83, ever feeling in those last 12 years the loss of his grandson who loved to listen to his tales of the "buck that got away" and who never tired of handling his hand carved, well-polished powder horn hung high up on the wall in their home. Ellis had to wait until Glory to meet his Grandmother Hannah (Goodwin) Emery who died at age 43 in 1893, eight years before his birth.

I am sure Ellis had often heard the story of his Grandfather Lebbeus' quest for happiness, stymied first by the death of his dear Sarah Page, five short years after they were wed, leaving their two little daughters Hannah and Etta motherless. A second marriage to his cousin Hulda Welch was short lived too, lasting

only eight years before she died, and grief reigned again in that little household. Lebbeus must have been an endearing man, for the next year found him wed to twenty-year-old Martha, Sarah's sister whom I am sure loved not only her brother-in-law but those dear little nieces, Hannah now twelve and Etta, nine. My Grandpa Jacob would be the first of eight children born of this union, three of whom died in infancy. Jacob cherished his two stepsisters, later naming his only daughter after Etta.

The place Ellis called home, just up the hill from Richard Daniel's home on the Goodfellow Road, was a small low-slung farmhouse with a metal roof that sloped gently outward covering a full-length front porch. Sidled up to it was a large shed and beyond it a large three storied barn. Photos show small outbuildings that we know from Ellis and Clarence's writings housed myriads of chickens, ducks and rabbits, their pets, their responsibility.

Thanks to my cousin Ruth Whitcomb and to Martha Montague her daughter, I have many postcards and letters penned by Ellis. From them and his tiny diary which he faithfully kept till two days before his death, we get a glimpse into the life of a happy, affectionate, obviously bright lad with boundless energy: his Dad's right-hand man!

His fifth-grade report card signed by Millie J. Whitehill shows A & B grades, tardy two times, dismissed two, and absent eight and one half.

Our oldest correspondence is a beautifully colored Christmas postcard depicting two Dutch children pulling a sled laden with holly, inscribed with "A Joyous Christmastide", addressed to Master Ellis Welch, Groton, Vermont, signed simply, "L.A.E." and postmarked Newbury, Vermont, Dec. 1908. He would have been seven and the fact he kept it in pristine condition is evidence he treasured it.

Ellis' handwritten letters written to his family and friends give insight into his life and character. He describes going to school with his older sister, Etta, helping his Papa with chores during sugaring, when they tapped 200+ trees and threshing oats when the engine was giving them trouble. Also raising rabbits with his younger brother, Clarence. and raising chickens with setting hens and one hen sitting on duck eggs. About getting a new bicycle, croquet set and writing paper in a December 1914 letter. He told about Willie Dunn moving to Monroe, NH and Mrs. Wrinkle and Mrs. Page recovering from an illness.

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When Ellis was diagnosed with diabetes is unclear. What a blow it must have been to the whole family for they realized it was a death sentence. One can only imagine the pall that now hung over that once happy household. My Dad was about eight when faced with the fact his big brother whom he idolized had a disease for which there was no cure. He shared how Ellis, now denied sugar in any form, craved it so much that he would go into the store in town and beg the owner to sell him some candy. Forewarned the store-keeper had to refuse him and keep a close watch that he did not manage to swipe some in desperation.

By September 15, 1915 Ellis was so ill he had to be hospitalized in Burlington. He apparently went well armed with writing paper, envelopes, postcards, pencils, pens, and stamps, as well as some spending money. His letters and cards that he penned daily to Papa, Mamma and Clarence are heartrending. As his strength waned so did his penmanship and spelling likewise.

These letters revealed his failing health, loneliness, and homesickness. He was anxious for visits from his family. The last few letters from Burlington were upbeat with anticipation of coming home and some even had notes from his Doctor who was concerned about his homesickness.

Sometime in the Fall of 1915 Ellis came home from Burlington Hospital, likely mid-September for we have no more correspondence from there, his last letter written to Etta October 5, 1915 was from Groton. He apparently had regained a measure of strength. His family waited with bated breath knowing the reprieve would be short lived. They took him down to have an official portrait done that showed a leaner and more mature face (see photo on page 8). The next eight weeks are silent ones.

January 1916 was Ellis final month of life. He began keeping a tiny diary, logging in simple sentences of his daily activities.

- Sat. 1/16 I went down to the village and painted some pictures
- Sun. 2 I went up to Uncle Edwards to see little bee
- Mon. 3 Helped Papa kill a pig
- Tues.4 I went over in the snowplow with Papa
- Wed. 5 Helped Papa with some wood and went to the mill
- Thurs.6 Went down to the mill with Papa
- Fri. 7 Went over to Etta and drew up logs
- Sat. 8 Went to Wells river to get my teeth filled
- Sun. 9 I went over to Baldons to get the yoke for my steers
- Mon. 10 I yoked up my steers papa went and got a sled

- Tues. 11 I went to the village with Papa and helped draw up some wood
- Wed. 12 I drew wood with my steers and went to Edwards
- Thurs. 13 Papa and I built a sled for my steers
- Fri. 14 I drew wood with my steers
- Sat. 15 I drove the horses down to the village for Papa
- Sun. 16 I was sick and had to stay in the house
- Mon. 17 I was sick and had to stay in the house
- Tues. 18 I went to Edwards with Papa
- Wed. 19 *(In Aunt Etta's handwriting)*
Ellis was worse. Had the Dr. & Etta came home from school.
- Thurs. 20 Had the Dr in the morning and evening Much worse
Eliza came at 4 o'clock
- Fri. 21 Ellis died at about 4:45 a.m. today

My Dad, nine years old, was at his brother's bedside that early morning and shared with me his last moments.

Ellis was weak but alert, propped up on pillows in his own bed, when he suddenly bolted upright, obviously very frightened. "Keep them out, keep them out, they are trying to get in." he kept shouting gesturing toward the door. His Mother sought to calm him assuring him there was no one there but to no avail. "Yes, there is, the angels... they are trying to get in... they are coming to get me!" Moments later Ellis collapsed on the bed and was gone. When I asked my Dad if he thought Ellis really saw angels, his quiet reply was "I never doubted it."

My Grandparents with grieving hearts laid their firstborn son to rest in a newly purchased lot at the Groton Village cemetery not far from where his Grandfather Lebbeus, and three wives Sarah, Hulda and Martha and his aunt Martha Blanche Hayes and her husband Fred now lie buried. Etta is buried at Ryegate Corner with Uncle Bob. My Grandfather Jacob, Grandmother Evalona and my Dad, Clarence are all in a row either side of Ellis, all awaiting the resurrection.

Ellis had only ten months to get to know his brother-in-law, Bob; he would have had to live twenty more years to meet his sister-in-law, Ida Shatney, Tiny, dark haired and vivacious: he would have liked my Mom.

Etta said her mother was never well after Ellis' death, succumbing to Bright's disease just five years later, November 1921. My Dad, just 16, was again at Brightlook Hospital where she died. He shared that scene with me also and I will share that story later.

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For two years my Dad and Grandpa Jacob “held the fort”, the once lively house now silent and in my Dad’s words, “dark.” “When my Mother died the sunshine left!” he said. The day came when Jacob called on Annie (Bernie) Main, Walter’s widow who now was alone with five young children. Always known to be a man of few words, the story goes he gently but bluntly said, “You need a husband, I need a wife.” Apparently that proposal and his charm was enough, without fanfare they wed, she and the children moved in, the quiet house never quiet nor empty again.

My Dad left home soon after his five step siblings arrived still grieving the loss of his mother and his brother and, the exclusive company of his Dad. I cannot imagine the ache in my Grandfather Jacob’s heart as the door on his first family slammed shut with the unhappy departure of his only remaining son. Nothing he said had persuaded him to stay. He could only square his shoulders and embrace the task of raising his new family, trusting in Etta’s promise to give Clarence a home ‘till he was ready to make a life for himself.

Ellis’ presence remained a part of the household, ‘till Jacob died in October 1940, as his large oval portrait hung on the wall in the farmhouse along with the even larger one of Ellis’ Great Grandmother Hannah (Goodwin) Emery holding his Mother, Evalona. I suspect many an evening, the house quiet with all the new children tucked in, that my Grandfather, in moments of solitude, surveyed those beloved faces, in the light of the kerosene lamp on the dining room table and lost himself in memories.

Not only his image, but Ellis’ name too is memorialized by those who so wanted to keep that memory alive. Etta and Bob named their only son, Robert Ellis. My parents likewise named my youngest brother, Michael Ellis. It was his dearly loved Uncle Edward who best remembered him by naming his last child, Ellis Roberts Welch.

Now it is our oldest Timothy Virgil Shields who has that large oval portrait hanging on his wall and the scrapbook with all the letters, postcards and photos, along with the tiny diary: charged with the mission to see that his Great Uncle Ellis is never forgotten, and those momentous are passed down to future generations.

The End

Groton Historical Society News

By Deborah Jurist

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Jigsaw Puzzle of Groton Village painting by Nichole Wolfgang is available from GHS for \$20 plus shipping for funds to repair and paint the Peter Paul House. Call Lise Shallberg at (802) 584-3283 to order with your credit card. GHS has a squareup.com account to accept all major credit cards now.

Diane Kreis was recognized for her many contributions to the Society and the community with an honorary life-membership.

Social distancing and stay home recommendations to slow the spread of COVID-19 have impacted some summer activities and may still be in effect for fall. Files are now reorganized and Dale Brown's stories of Groton are easier to find.

VHS reported that Vermont, Montana and Idaho, had the most improvement in reducing the spread of COVID-19, according to a study between 24 March and 21 April. Improvement was not related to density of infections on March 24th, nor to the state's population.

Actions were taken nationally to control spread of the disease earlier and by 24 March, the average rate of spread decreased from 23.5 percent. per day to 19.5 percent; after 24 March, it went from 19.5 percent per day to 7.5 percent.

Prior to 24 March there were no differences in the decline of spread among states, but after 24 March it was significant, and the date stay home orders were issued correlated with these differences. Montana, Idaho, and Vermont showed the greatest improvement—Nebraska, South Dakota, and Iowa the least.

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