



The Peacham Patriot

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Peacham Historical Association

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New PHA Publication Planned for Spring 2012

In commemoration of the Civil War Sesquicentennial, the Peacham Historical Association (PHA) will publish a comprehensive history, *Remembering Peacham in the Civil War*. The book will document Peacham's contributions to the war efforts and will focus not only on the men who fought in the war but also the Peacham home front.

The book will include an introductory chapter about Peacham men in the Civil War and biographical information about the 173 sons, husbands, brothers, and friends who enlisted with a sense of adventure and duty and unquestioning patriotism to preserve the Union. The book tells their stories through transcriptions of their letters, diaries, and reminiscences. The first-hand accounts offer the opportunity to experience the history of this era through the eyes and words of Peacham soldiers who were there. A central component of the book will be the transcriptions of Isaac N. Watts' 1864 and 1865 war diaries and the transcription of Mark Wheeler's memoir about his imprisonment at Andersonville.

In addition to the first-hand narratives, the book includes photographs of soldiers and camp life. The book will conclude with a look at the contributions and sacrifices of the women and men who stayed behind.

PHA's Civil War Letters Preserved and Digitized

During the Civil War, Peacham soldiers wrote many letters to their families at home. Their letters offer eyewitness accounts and deepen our understanding and knowledge about the Civil War. The letters also offer captivating glimpses of how the war affected men's and women's lives and the sacrifices made by Peacham families. Not only did the letters give poignant descriptions of the experiences of the war seen through the eyes of Peacham soldiers, but they also brought the

distant conflict home to Peacham families. They underscore a strong sense of community and the importance of the connections with family members and friends.

The Peacham Historical Association is fortunate to have about 90 letters in its collection. Its collection of Civil War era letters (with envelopes) includes 73 letters by Hazen Hooker, who enlisted three months before his twentieth birthday on August 8, 1862, served in Co. G, 3rd Vermont Regiment, and was killed in the battle of the Wilderness on May 5, 1864. In addition there are letters written by six other Peacham soldiers during their service in the Union Army.

With support from the Vermont Humanities Council, PHA has now conserved and digitized all 83 letters. The Council grant funded the needed conservation treatment by M.J. Davis, an experienced paper conservator, to stabilize and preserve the letters.

The grant, together with additional funds, also supported the digital capture of the letters. Digital technology makes it possible to build virtual archives that allow online access and enhance use of these unique materials. To ensure access to digital surrogates of its Civil War letters, PHA contracted with the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) in Andover, MA. NEDCC is a national leader in digital preservation. Its Imaging Services department specializes in digitization of rare materials, and its staff members are experienced in careful handling of fragile materials. NEDCC uses high-quality digital photography that reproduced the faded writing and subtleties of handwritten letters much better than ordinary scanning. The example below shows the first page of Hazen B. Hooker's November 6, 1862 letter to his parents.

Next spring, PHA will contribute the digital images and transcripts of the letters to the new website of digitized research resources, [Vermonters in the Civil War](#), which is managed by the University of Vermont Special Collections Department's Center for Digital Initiatives (CDI) and which provides access to Civil War letters written by Vermont soldiers.

volunteers, who spent a day visiting Peacham's historical sites.

We once more held the Annual Ghost Walk on July 4th and Foliage Day. It focused on soldiers who served in the Union armies and family members who stayed behind. We also held a special Ghost Walk for 90 vintage car enthusiasts, who were visiting from all across the United States.

In August, PHA hosted two musical events. Well-known singer Linda Radtke performed her program: "The Vermont Civil War Songbook" at the PHA Annual Meeting. Dressed in period costume, she shared songs popular in Vermont during the Civil War as well as letters from Peacham soldiers. At the second concert, pianist Paul Orgel performed early Romantic music in the annual Ray Anderson Memorial recital.

A special community event was the successful yard sale at the East Peacham Schoolhouse. Morris McCain together with Charles Byron and other volunteers organized this second yard sale, and Morris describes it in this issue.

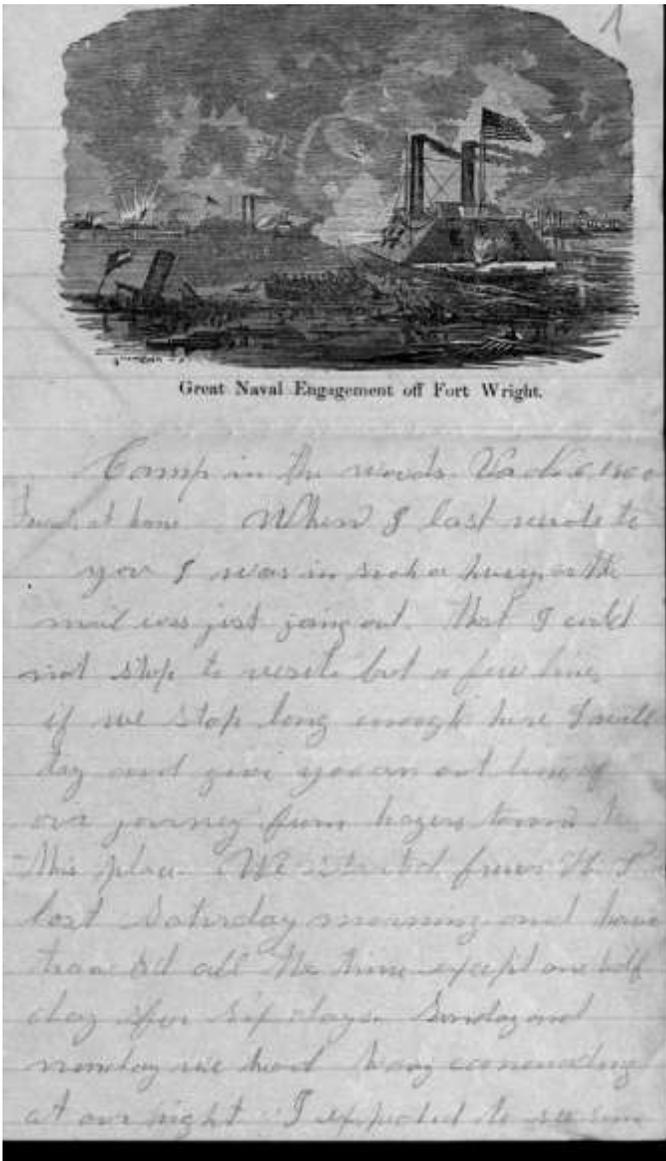
As I reflect on the accomplishments of the last six months, I am reminded that none of these activities could be possible without the commitment of PHA's many volunteers. PHA is fortunate to have so many people who contribute innumerable hours to making PHA's operations and programs possible. I also want to thank our members for their continued support. Every time you renew your membership, donate objects to the collection, or make a contribution, you are ensuring the future of the Peacham Historical Association and the preservation and protection of Peacham's heritage for today and tomorrow. Thank you!



From all of us at PHA, I wish you a joyous holiday season.

Peacham Patriot Available Electronically

PHA now offers our members the option of receiving the *Peacham Patriot* electronically. For our small organization, email distribution saves printing and mailing costs. Many members already receive renewal notices for their PHA membership in their email box, and we hope that you will consider taking advantage of the electronic distribution of our newsletter. If you are interested in switching to email distribution, please send a message to scottjutta2@gmail.com. Future issues of the newsletter will then be sent to your email inbox as an attachment in the Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format. Thank you for supporting PHA.



President's Report

PHA President, Jutta Scott



PHA had another busy summer and fall. Our efforts focused extensively on telling the story of Peacham in the Civil War. Some of these activities are described in this issue, including conservation of Civil War letters in PHA's collection, and preparation of a new publication about Peacham in the Civil War. Another highlight was the special exhibit "Peacham in the Civil War" at the Historical House, which showcased Peacham soldiers' photographs, documents and objects and which had been made possible in part by a grant from the Vermont Humanities Council. Many visitors toured the exhibit. Among them were about 50 Vermont Historical Society

Editor's note: During the commemoration of the start of the Civil War, each issue of the *Peacham Patriot* will feature the biography of a Peacham Civil War soldier. This issue tells the story of:

Civil War Soldier: Turrell Elkins Harriman¹
By Michelle Arnosky Sherburne



Photograph Courtesy of Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium

Turrell Elkins Harriman was the youngest Peacham boy to enlist in the Union Army. Turrell, the son of David Elkins and Jane Harriman, was born in Peacham May 9, 1846, the oldest of five children. When his father enlisted in the Union army on June 1, 1861, Turrell was a 15-year-old student. This story begins with Turrell working as a farm laborer on his uncle Alvin Harriman's farm on Cow Hill in the western part of Peacham while his father was away at war. He was determined that he was to be a soldier and help fight for his country. He tried to get his mother's permission but she needed his help to support the family. In December 1861, he ran away from his uncle's farm and walked 13 miles to the Avenue House in St. Johnsbury where a company was being enlisted. He approached the recruiting officer who

could tell he was too young, since the minimum age for enlistment was 18 years. But the recruiting officer told Turrell that if he came back on December 31 and ended up on the train headed to the regiment's headquarters, he was in.

So that is just what Turrell did. He boarded the train unnoticed and ended up at Camp Holbrook in Brattleboro. It was a month before his mother learned of his whereabouts. He wrote: "So you see it was through much deception that I became a soldier."

He joined the 8th Vermont Regiment of Volunteers, Company C and was mustered in on February 2, 1862 for three years. In the middle of January 1862, the 8th Vermont Regiment was issued their uniforms, equipment and weapons. Turrell wrote home: "You can imagine how I looked, a boy 15 years old, loaded down with my impediments. But I was as straight as an arrow for the application, and I walked past the officer with the air of a six footer. I expected to hear him ask the captain, "how old is this man?" But he did not, and I was in it all right."

Turrell's regiment trained at Camp Holbrook until March 1862 when the 8th Vermont Regiment traveled to New York where the troops embarked for a long ocean journey. They traveled down the Eastern coastline around Florida to the Gulf of Mexico.

Turrell wrote home throughout his war service, and nine letters have been saved. He wrote from Camp Holbrook, during his ocean journey, and his service in Louisiana and Virginia. His letters were from the perspective of a boy catapulted into manhood in a matter of months. His letters are descriptive, well-written with good grammar and detailed a soldier's life and encounters in the Deep South. He shared his thoughts and impressions, good and bad, and also inquired about his family. He openly stated his confidence in his choice to go to war and said that he was prepared to die an honorable death.

Years after the end of the war, at age 55, Turrell recalled his soldiering days in a series of letters to his youngest sister Kate Harriman who wanted a record of what her brother had experienced during the Civil War. The dates of his letters show that he took time and thought to compose them, and he wrote them over a period of ten months in 1901. The "memoir-in-letters" was saved by the family, and in 1975 were donated together with his war letters by Mrs. David E. Harriman to the Fairbanks Museum in St. Johnsbury.

¹ The papers of Turrell E. Harriman are in the collections of the Fairbanks Museum and Planetarium. We gratefully acknowledge the permission to retell Turrell's story based on his letters and reminiscences.

Taken together, his letters and reminiscences tell his story. Turrell began his war experience on the Western Campaign in Louisiana in 1862. In spring 1862, Turrell's company traveled to Louisiana and up the Mississippi River and joined regiments for training under General Benjamin Butler. His reminiscences provide vivid descriptions of the Regiment's ship voyage around the tip of Florida to the western front. The 8th Vermont Regiment arrived at Ship Island, off the coast of Mississippi on April 5. It was then the southernmost training base for Union forces where 18,000 troops were assembled. A month later, the regiment was ordered to New Orleans. Turrell recalled the arrival in New Orleans on May 9, 1862, his sixteenth birthday. "As we drew near to New Orleans, the view was even more enchanting, near us the extensive old plantations with their orange groves and magnolia trees, beyond, forests of live oak with their long beards of gray moss."

The regiment spent the summer of 1862 stationed at Algiers across the river from New Orleans. Turrell tells of Union soldiers' foraging and raiding area plantations for fruit and vegetables. Turrell also recounts his regiment's skirmishes with Confederate forces while on construction duty to repair damage to railroads and bridges in southern Louisiana.

1863 was more of a fighting year than training or construction work for Turrell's regiment. By springtime, under the command of General Nathaniel P. Banks, they went to Bayou Teche, La., joining regiments from Indiana, Michigan, Connecticut, and New York. The troops were involved in fighting at New Iberia and Vermillionville. They targeted the Confederate gunboat, "John L. Cotton" and destroyed it. Turrell's regiment was involved in the major Western campaign conquest of Port Hudson after a 42-day siege.

The troops were on the move soon after, ordered to Brashear City, La. in pursuit of Confederate General Taylor's troops. Union forces pursued the Confederates through Franklin, New Iberia, and Opelousas all the way to Carion Crow Bayou. By November 7, a final skirmish ended with a Confederate withdrawal. The troops spent the end of 1863 at New Iberia. He wrote of suffering from the rain, sleet, and snow with no shelter and lack of wood. But they still had to keep picket duty.

1864 began with Turrell re-enlisting for another three year's term, and he received the usual veteran furlough that allowed him to travel home and spend time with his parents and siblings. The regiment moved to a new camp at Franklin, La. When 300 new recruits arrived,

Turrell was already a seasoned veteran at the young age of 17. He tells that for three months the time was spent with basic soldiering and training for the new recruits. In July 1864, the 8th Vermont Regiment's Western Campaign was completed and directives were to go Fort Monroe, Va. and then on to Washington D.C.

During the Eastern Campaign in Virginia his regiment was involved in the Battle of Winchester, Fisher's Hill and then the Battle of Cedar Creek. The Battle of Cedar Creek was one of the bloodiest battles of the war, involving the most Vermont regiments. Turrell was on the picket line at Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864 when the Confederate forces smashed the Union line, and he witnessed General Philip Sheridan's famous rally ride that turned the battle around for the Union.

He wrote that he started the year 1865 off on a furlough with his family and then returned to the front where February and March were quiet months for the troops.

Turrell recalled the end of the war. The first of April, Turrell's regiment started on a five-day trip back to Cedar Creek. The soldiers enjoyed two nights of band concerts. The second night during the concert, the soldiers were startled with shots fired. A messenger rode into camp shouting, "LEE HAS SURRENDERED! VICTORY FOR THE UNION!" So the soldiers partied all night. The next day they marched toward Summit Point and were all excited about the Union victory.

He recounts that only six days later, the shocking, horrible news of Lincoln's assassination arrived and that the soldiers were devastated. Turrell remembered passing the presidential funeral train en route to Illinois as his regiment on April 20 was ordered to go to Washington by train where the search for the President's assassins was on. Turrell's regiment arrived at Fort Stevens to help form a chain picket to prevent suspected assassins escaping city limits. He tells how John Wilkes Booth was captured a few weeks later, and eventually suspected assassins and accomplices were arrested. In June, during the Conspirators Trial, Turrell's regiment guarded the penitentiary as well as the streets as the witnesses passed through to get to Pennsylvania Avenue for the trial.

He was mustered out in June 1865 after a successful military career. He had advanced quickly in rank considering his young age. He was promoted three times from Private to Corporal on November 11, 1863 and then to Sergeant on July 1, 1864 and finally on December 4, 1864 to Orderly Sergeant.

After the war he went home to St. Johnsbury. In 1867, he married Mary Gaston, and they had three children. They lived in St. Johnsbury Center and he worked for Fairbanks Scales as a molder contractor.

Turrell was active in the Passumpsic Masonic Lodge and rose in degrees quickly; from 1870 to 1875, he was made a Knights Templar and part of the Order of Malta. He was also a member of the Congregational Church and served as postmaster for six years in St. Johnsbury Center.

His health suffered after returning home from the war and these ailments bothered him the rest of his life. He died at age 57 on May 4, 1903 and is buried in the St. Johnsbury Center Cemetery.

East Peacham Schoolhouse Yard Sale **By Morris McCain**



Photograph courtesy of Charles Byron

For the second time in three years PHA held a highly enjoyable community yard sale at the East Peacham Schoolhouse. Starting at 9 a.m. on Saturday, September 3, just as the sun was coming out following early morning showers, the sale offered hundreds of items donated by generous friends of PHA. At least a dozen volunteers and assorted family members set up tables and arranged donated items in the expansive front yard of the old schoolhouse in East Peacham. Early birds who lined up for the opening of the sale included an antiques dealer from Montpelier. He took an interest in prospects for restoring the building and possibly donating authentic schoolhouse equipment to furnish it. Outside vendors invited to the sale set up separate tables to offer their own finds.

This year the yard sale was coordinated by Morris McCain and Charlie Byron, who used their truck to visit donors and select items that might attract buyers. Of the many generous contributors some were downsizing residences, others giving up summer homes or moving from town, and some were just thoughtful friends of Peacham history with family treasures they could offer for the sale. New PHA trustee Lynne Lawson and four other volunteers spent a total of nearly twenty hours sorting through and pricing all the donations. The sale featured tools, toys, dishes and glassware, a flat-screen TV, a garden cart, a watering trough, linens, hand-sewn items, backpacks, antique lamps – an eye-catching array when spread out in front of the old schoolhouse. Especially popular was a brightly colored children's cash register, bought by a German couple to take back home for their daughter. Just as the sale was set to open, trustee Dave Stauffer arrived with new wooden plaques for the building, identifying its construction date of 1858 and acknowledging the donation of the schoolhouse to PHA by the Del Prete family of New York in May 2008.

By the time the yard sale ended at one o'clock, the Association had netted over \$500, according to Jutta Scott, PHA President. The funds, along with proceeds from other programs and contributions from PHA supporters, will help the association face several financial challenges: finding space to store its collections in a safe and secure space, conserving endangered manuscripts, establishing an endowment, and making improvements and repairs at the Historical House in Peacham. PHA has researched the cost of restoring the schoolhouse and opening it to the public and found that very considerable resources would be needed for that purpose.

Some of the visitors to the yard sale had been students at the old schoolhouse, and many others were interested in looking inside and hearing the school's history from PHA Curator, Lorna Quimby. Originally designed to house all eight grades of students in its district, the school had no transportation to offer students for many years. Instead the school district paid mileage to families whose children had to walk more than a mile to get there. In later years the school offered only two grades, with three other schools operating in Peacham at the same time. By then a bus took students to all four districts.

A picture of the East Peacham Schoolhouse and its students from 1951-2 can be found in the PHA publication, *Historic Homes of Peacham*. If you went to this or another of Peacham's one-room schools, will you share your images with us? For more information,

please phone Lorna Quimby at 592-3571, or Jutta Scott at 592-3262, or contact PHA at info@peachamhistorical.org.

Carrie Ellen Thresher Memorial Gift Awarded to Jesse Danielson and Meghan Deasy

The Peacham Historical Association at its Annual Meeting on August 2, 2011 awarded the Carrie Ellen Thresher Memorial Gift to Jesse Danielson and Meghan Deasy in recognition of their contributions to the Peacham community and in Carrie Ellen Thresher's memory. This year the gift was awarded to two graduating high school seniors and is designed to further the students' education. Jesse Danielson is attending Wheaton College in Norton, MA, and Meghan Deasy is a student at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, NY. Carrie Thresher was an important person in the Peacham community. She felt that it was essential to take an interest in and give back to our town. The annual gift recognizes her strong interest in community service. Established in 2002, this annual gift to a graduating senior encourages high school students to take an active role in our town.

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Membership Support

Your annual membership support is a critical investment in PHA and PHA depends on membership dues to support its many programs.

Dues are \$10.00 per person or \$15.00 for a family. We also offer a life membership for \$250. We hope that we can count on you. Please renew when you receive your annual reminder.