



# The Peacham Patriot

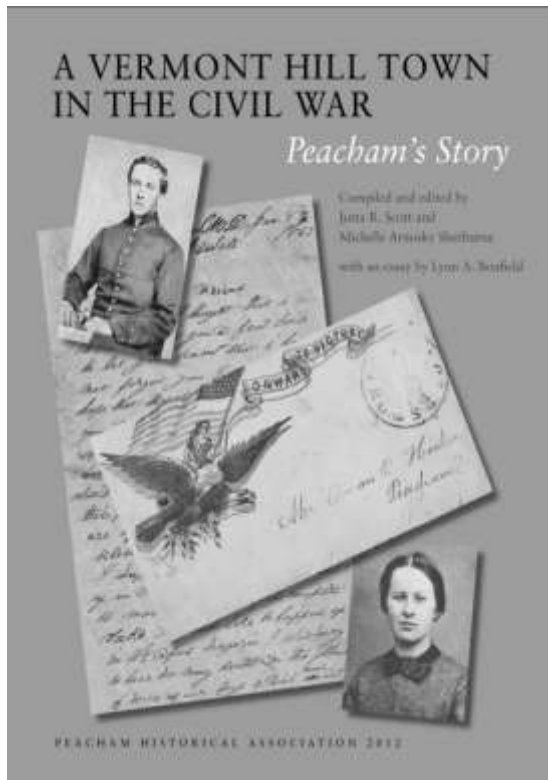
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Volume 26, Number 2

Peacham Historical Association

Summer 2012

## Peacham Historical Association Celebrates Publication of Town's Civil War History



Drawing from scores of letters, diaries, memoirs, and photographs of Peacham soldiers, *A Vermont Hill Town in the Civil War: Peacham's Story* vividly tells the story of the Peacham men who went to war and the families who endured life on the home front. When the Civil War broke out in April 1861, Peacham was a prosperous hill town with small family farms and a population of 1,247. The response in Peacham to the start of the Civil War was immediate. During the first year of the war, 55 Peacham men enlisted. In all, 169 Peacham men served the Union. Peacham soldiers fought at Lee's Mill, Antietam, Gettysburg, the Wilderness,

Cold Harbor, Cedar Creek, Petersburg, and in many other Union battles. The war took a heavy toll among Peacham's young men: 16 Peacham soldiers were killed in battle or mortally wounded; five perished in Confederate prisons; and disease took the lives of 27 Peacham soldiers.

Previously unpublished letters, diaries, personal recollections, and photographs provide insights into soldiers' experiences during the war. The book tells their stories through selected letters and features the 1864 and 1865 war diaries penned by Isaac N. Watts, who served in the 11th Vermont Regiment, and retells Mark Wheeler's harrowing experiences of his imprisonment at Andersonville in Georgia. It also summarizes the memoirs of Peacham's youngest soldier, 15-year-old Turrell Elkins Harriman.

The book blends narrative with a rich array of period photographs and images that are drawn from the Peacham Historical Association's collections, several Vermont depositories, national collections, and private sources. Included are the July 1861 stereo view of the Peacham boys in the Third Vermont Regiment during their training in St. Johnsbury and many newly discovered photographs of Peacham soldiers.

Adding further detail to this comprehensive history of our town in the Civil War, biographical sketches chronicle the lives of the 169 Peacham men who served during the War.

The Civil War was not won on the battlefield alone; those on the home front made vital contributions as well. The final chapters look at the contributions and sacrifices of the women and men who stayed behind. Lynn A. Bonfield's essay describes the important role of the home front in supporting the war effort. The essay is followed by a biography of Martha Johnson, who left Peacham and in 1863 became a teacher of newly freed slaves in South Carolina. The last chapter describes the rejoicing in Peacham after the news arrived of General Robert

E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.

**"A Vermont Hill Town in the Civil War: Peacham's Story"** edited by Jutta R. Scott and Michelle Arnosky Sherburne, with an essay by Lynn A. Bonfield. Book design: Bodenweber Design.

It is now available for purchase at the Peacham Library and the Peacham Corner Guild, and online on PHA's website: [peachamhistorical.org](http://peachamhistorical.org). Softcover \$25; hardcover (available in late July) \$35.



**President's Report**  
PHA President, Jutta Scott

PHA had much to celebrate in the past six months. On June 10 we celebrated the release of our newest publication, ***A Vermont Hill Town in the Civil War: Peacham's Story***. Taking advantage of new on-demand printing technology, the book was printed from electronically transmitted files within three weeks after the files were sent. PHA will maintain a small inventory, and we will reorder as needed.

PHA's collections of family papers were enriched by the gifts of 83 letters written by Martin and Parker family members between 1859 and the late 1800s. The collection includes letters written by Luther Fletcher Parker, who was Peacham's village physician for over 40 years, and by his wife Louisa (Martin) Parker. The letters were donated by Jane White Demers, their great granddaughter. At the same time, Francena White Goodine, also a great granddaughter, donated Parker family photographs showing Dr. Parker's home life and also surrounding areas in Peacham. Look for the next issue of the *Peacham Patriot* for a more complete description of these two donations.

PHA's Board welcomed the good news that PHA will end the fiscal year on June 30 with a small surplus, and that our Annual Fund Drive exceeded its \$5,000 goal by more than 20%. None of this would be possible without the generous support of our loyal members and volunteers. We are grateful to the many donors who believe in the importance

of PHA and who show that commitment by supporting our Annual Fund and by their membership. Sixty percent of our annual operating budget must be generated through donations and membership fees. We thank all our donors and members for their generous support.

PHA is fortunate to have many active volunteers. PHA could not function without Lorna Quimby's dedicated work. PHA is grateful to the volunteers, who process and catalog additions to the collections; our docents, who during the summer welcome visitors at the Historical House; our "ghosts", who bring Peacham's history to life; our Board officers and trustees who manage PHA's operations; and all the volunteers who assist at events and help with many other tasks.

In an effort to reach out to the Peacham community and visitors to our town, PHA published a new brochure that highlights PHA's programs, describes PHA's buildings, and lists our publications. To learn more about our work, please pick up a copy of the brochure at the Post Office or the Historical House or visit [www.peachamhistorical.org](http://www.peachamhistorical.org) or join us on Facebook.

I extend best wishes for a wonderful summer and look forward to welcoming you at the Annual Meeting on August 1, starting at 7 p.m.

## **Choices Made by Five Men in the Same Family during the Civil War**

By Lynn A. Bonfield

In 1840, when widow Roxana Brown Walbridge (1802-62) married Lyman Watts (1802-75), a widower, in Peacham, four boys born between 1832 and 1835 were united on the Watts farm on East Hill. Roxana's sons, Dustan and Augustus, and Lyman's sons, Lyman S. and Charles, were joined in 1842 by a new brother, Roxana and Lyman's son, Isaac. All lived in a small cape on an active farm along with Roxana's four daughters and the two girls Roxana and Lyman had together. All called Roxana mother and Lyman father. As these children became adults, some moved far away from Peacham, although all remained close throughout their lives. This was partly achieved through letter-writing to their parents and to each other. And often these letters were forwarded to members of

the family not at the addressed site so all could share the news.

When the Civil War broke out, all of the boys in the family faced the difficult decision about serving the Union. The five boys made different decisions: Two joined the Union Army, one served as minister to soldiers, and two did not participate in the Civil War.



Dustan S. Walbridge, ca. 1864.  
Photo courtesy of a private collection.

Roxana's first son, **Dustan S. Walbridge (1832-64)**, enlisted on August 7, 1862 and served in Co. A, 11th Regiment of Vermont Volunteers. Dustan grew up in Peacham, but moved to St. Johnsbury when he married in 1860. He wrote in November 1861 to his sister in California giving his concerns about joining the army: "*there is but*

*one consideration that makes me in the least regret taking such responsibilities [marriage and becoming a father] upon me, and that is a War consideration. It makes me feel mean to think that my country calls for men in her hour of need and I an able bodied man am here not ready for her call. I feele as though I ought to go,--but Abbie [his twenty-year-old wife] cant bair to hire me mention a thing about going she has a little one and her folks think I ought not to think of going."* His patriotism made him unable to hold out for long, and he enlisted in St. Johnsbury. In another letter to his sister he described the scene of soldiers leaving camp in Brattleboro for the forts near Washington, D.C.: "*we came here most of the way by rail. --were greeted on Every side with cheers, and waving of flags & handkerchiefs, many of the places in New England--the little girls would want to be boosted up to the car windows to give the soldier an apple or shake hands with them."*

Dustan was promoted to corporal and then to sergeant major and finally commissioned a second lieutenant. His skills were used in preparing a typographical map of areas where the army camped, and he was sent back to Vermont in 1863 to recruit

for his regiment. During this trip, he enjoyed time with his wife Abbie and their little girl Nellie whom he was "*all taken up with,*" according to Sophia Way of East Hill. In early June 1864 his regiment fought in the grisly battle at Coal Harbor, later to be known as Cold Harbor. Here Dustan was wounded in the arm. It had to be amputated in the field hospital. He was moved to Douglas Hospital in Washington, D.C. where he died on June 19 with his wife Abbie by his side. Dustan was buried in Peacham "*with Masonic Honors there was a very large Funeral,*" wrote Sophia Way on June 26 to Dustan's sister, Sarah Walbridge Way, in Northfield, Minnesota. His gravestone in the first row is one of the most beautiful in the cemetery. <sup>1</sup>



Lyman S. Watts, ca. 1864.  
Photo courtesy of the  
Chote Family Collection,  
West Barnet, VT.

Dustan's half brother, **Lyman S. Watts (1832-72)**, served the Union as a civilian. Having completed his seminary course, Lyman became a pastor at Dracut, Massachusetts. On leave from this work, he was appointed by the office of the U.S. Christian

Commission (set up to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of the men of the army) as a delegate to the Union Army for a four-week period. He reported on May 26, 1865 and was assigned to the 20th Corps in Washington. He served his month, and when he was discharged on June 27, he was tired and ill after long days of giving sermons, leading prayers and meeting with men individually. He never recovered his health, always short of energy. He married, fathered a daughter, and took

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1 Sources: Letters, Nov. 3, 1861, Dustan S. Walbridge, St. Johnsbury, to Clara Walbridge Rogers, San Francisco; private collection; Sept. 15, 1862, Dustan S. Walbridge, camp near Fort Lincoln, to Clara Walbridge Rogers, San Francisco; private collection; June 26, 1864, Sophia Edsen Way, Peacham, to Sarah Walbridge Way, Northfield, Minnesota, private collection. See also Lynn A. Bonfield, "Letters from the Past," *The North Star Monthly*, (Danville, Vermont), June 2011.

on the pulpit of the Barnet Congregational Church. His work left him totally fatigued, plus nursing his wife who died in 1870. He got tuberculosis and began a slow decline; he died June 3, 1872 at age 39. Although his overwork in helping Union soldiers contributed to his ill health, neither he nor his family blamed the war for his problems.<sup>2</sup>



Charles Watts  
Courtesy of Watts Family  
Collection

Father Lyman's second son, **Charles Watts (1835-75)**, never joined the Union efforts and stayed home. He was a Peacham farm boy who went west in 1855 in search of a new life. He took a teaching job in Monticello, Illinois, where he eventually settled, apprenticing to a local lawyer. He returned to

Peacham briefly in 1855 to marry a girl from a farm close to the Watts farm where he was raised. In Illinois there was no draft until 1864, and no scorn from neighbors who did not join the war effort, so he remained with his wife and children in Monticello.<sup>3</sup>

The fourth brother, **D. Augustus Walbridge (1835-81)**, would not have made a good soldier, and he never served. Augustus trained as a wheelwright, but unfortunately displayed mental instability. When the war began, he left for California. His brother Dustan explained the situation to their sister in San Francisco: "*Our folks [Mother and Father] thought it was not a verry good notion but I thought it was the best thing that he could do—there is nothing doing on [in] our trade hire now and I dont know when there will be again.—he is not one that is good for knocking around and finding jobs, is not a money catcher and if out of work is rather apt to get gloomy, have the blues &c. and for such times has not quite enough energy and goahead about him . . . he is still as ever . . .*" After the war, Augustus returned to Vermont and eventually

bought the Watts farm, but in 1881, only a few weeks after marrying, he committed suicide by hanging in the horse barn. <sup>4</sup>



Isaac N. Watts  
Courtesy of the Special  
Collections,  
Bailey/Howe Library,  
University of Vermont

The youngest son, **Isaac N. Watts (1842-81)**, enlisted against his father's wishes. Isaac worked on the family farm under the direction of his father. He had been a promising scholar, and his father offered to pay his commutation and aid him in his college expenses. But Isaac refused, and when he learned he was to be drafted into the Union Army when he became twenty-one in August 1863, he rushed the day before his birthday to enlist in Brattleboro. He wanted to be listed as a

volunteer rather than have the stigma of a "drafted man" attached to his name. His brother, Dustan, wrote that "*he hird that Isaac had some notion of Enlisting but that Father would not here of it—I do not blame Father for not wanting him to go, as he seems to be all the one left him to see to things [on the farm]—but I dont envy the man that hangs back these times.*" He adjusted to army life but still had his complaints as articulated in a letter: "*Sat night we started back the same road we came on marched all night and nearly all day yesterday, getting back nearly to Frederick City. It was an awful hot day and very hard to march. I can't see the use in marching back and forth and not see a reb in a dogs age.*"

Isaac served in Battery M, First Vermont Heavy Artillery, 11th Regiment of Vermont Volunteers. He was promoted to corporal and then sergeant. His regiment fought in some of the most famous battles of the war, beginning with Spotsylvania and Cold Harbor and later the battles of Winchester and Cedar Creek. He was finally mustered out on

<sup>2</sup> Source: *Roxana's Children*, pp. 151, 156.

<sup>3</sup> Source: *Roxana's Children*, pp. 52, 56.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Letter, Nov. 3, 1861, Dustan S. Walbridge, St. Johnsbury, to Clara Walbridge Rogers, San Francisco; private collection.

August 25, 1865 and arrived in Peacham on September 2. He was free from the army but noted in his diary: "*I am not yet my own boss, exactly, and don't suppose I ever will be. I have to come around on time every day.*" His father ruled the farm, and Isaac served as his farm hand until his father died in 1875.<sup>5</sup>

The stories of these five men illustrate the experiences and sacrifices made by one Peacham family during the Civil War. More detailed biographies of the three sons who served the Union are included in *A Vermont Hill Town in the Civil War: Peacham's Story*. Peacham Historical Association, 2012. The book includes transcriptions of Dustan's and Isaac's letters and the 1864 and 1865 war diaries written by Isaac. More stories relating to each of these men can also be found in Lynn A. Bonfield and Mary C. Morrison, *Roxana's Children: The Biography of a Nineteenth-Century Vermont Family*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.

## **1880s Stereo View of Peacham Academy Discovered**

By Dawn Wright

In February I traveled back to Peacham to close on the Alumni House that my husband and I were purchasing. I had visited Peacham in late September, to research my family roots and visit with friends, and while there fell in love with the area.

My husband and I were fortunate that when we traveled back to Peacham in November to look for houses, the Alumni House had just come back on the market for sale by the owner. We had looked at several houses in and around the area, but there was something about that house when we walked into it

that just felt right. As I type that, I realize how corny it sounds, but knowing my ancestors once lived in this town, walked these roads, attended church here, means something to me. It felt like home.

So as I stood in our new house after signing my life away, I was filled with bittersweet emotions. Sad that my husband, who is in Afghanistan, wasn't there to share this, excited that we had just purchased such a beautiful house, and completely fearful that we just bought a 165-year-old house! As so many of you know, old houses come with old things, and I decided that I better get it out of the way and start climbing into attics and basements to figure out what was there. In the house attic we have an early 1900s full-size headless mannequin leaning up against the brick chimney that scared the bejibbers out of me the first time I saw her. I've now named her Gigi, and she remains in the attic for now. Then I climbed into the garage attic, which held boxes and boxes of what, I didn't know. Upon examining these boxes we found that most were dry powdered milk and eggs that some once very happy mice had made homes and a feast out of, now their final resting place. Also were boxes of cans labeled Beef and Gravy; I wasn't about to open those cans, considering that all of those boxes were dated 1956. In addition to the rather out-of-date food we found cooking trays, utensils, metal pitchers, empty glass cider jugs and stacks of old metal lunch trays. It was suggested to me that we could use the trays as sleds and try them out down a slope. If you see us racing down a hill, you'll know that metal trays make good sleds! After going through about half the boxes, little mice corpses in old glass cider jugs, and dried milk and eggs, I decided to leave the remainder of the boxes for another time. As I was climbing down the attic stairs, I noticed papers under one of the floorboards. Now, I'm not a squeamish woman, my career has been spent hunting down drug lords or terrorists in caves in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the thought of sticking my hand under floor boards in an attic just didn't appeal to me; not a fan of spiders. But there was what I thought might be a picture, and I really wanted to see it. So I took a broken board and stuck it under there instead (not stupid either), and found the wonderful picture you see. It's a stereo view taken probably in the 1880s or a little later. On the

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5 Sources: Letters, May 10, 1863, Dustan S. Walbridge, Fort Totten, Washington, D.C., to Lucy Ella Watts, Peacham; private collection; and August 1, 1864, Isaac N. Watts, camp near Harpers Ferry, W. Virginia, to Alice Watts, Peacham; private collection; Isaac N. Watts, diary entry, Dec. 31, 1865; Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont.



back of the photo is written *L B Whipp* and the initials *S.A.L.* It also says, "*To be Returned.*" I guess it wasn't returned.



I contacted the Historical Association and asked if they would be interested in the picture and a few of the items we found belonging to the old Peacham Academy. I hope as time goes on that I will find more things that will unfold the story of this house. I wish the old saying were true, "If walls could talk"; there are so many questions I would ask. I am intrigued by the history of this house and want to know of the people that lived here.

### **New Notecards**

PHA recently printed new notecards. Based on a painting by Hertha Forrai, a Peacham resident, the cards depict a Memorial Day Parade in Peacham. The color painting is shown here in black and white.



The new cards as well as the older cards with a winter scene of Peacham Corner based on a painting by Horace Gilmore are available at the Peacham Library and the Peacham Corner Guild. \$10 for a set of 8 blank cards with envelopes.

### **PHA Working Group Develops Plans for New Collections Storage and Research Facility**

The PHA Board established the New Facility Working Group at its September 30, 2011 meeting and approved the Group's responsibilities. The charge to the Working Group is to explore further the option of building a new fireproof, secure facility for storing PHA's collections in the rear of the Historical House, PHA's Museum on Church Street. The members of the Group are: Charles Byron, Polly Jerome, Larry Jensen, Diana Senturia, and Jutta R. Scott (chair).

The challenge of preserving Peacham's history and its historic documents and artifacts is daunting. But one key strategy requires housing the collections in a stable environment with fire protection, security, and adequate storage and working space. PHA's current space in the Old Town Office meets none of these requirements.

The goal is to build a publicly accessible collections storage and research facility in back of the Historical House on land leased from the Town of Peacham. The new facility would be designed in harmony with Peacham's historic architecture and would provide for the following functions:

environmentally appropriate collections storage; collections management and processing space; exhibit design and preparation; display of the Peacham Academy model of the school; and workspace for collections staff and researchers. There would be climate-controlled storage for archival materials, paintings, textiles, and rare books. This means controlled temperature, humidity, and lighting. It also means adequate flat storage for large items such as maps, works of art, large photographs and documents. All storage areas would be fireproof, secure, and accessible only by the curator.

The new facility would house the archival collections that are currently stored in the vault at

the Old Town Office; as well as store textiles, artwork and artifacts that are currently held on the second floor of the Old Town Office.

PHA is working with the Peacham Academy Alumni Association to plan for dedicated space to house the 8'x10' model of the Peacham Academy building on a raised platform. Peacham Academy memorabilia would be displayed in wall-mounted cases.

The new facility would have a workroom with two work stations for volunteers; adequate space for processing archival collections, including flat surfaces; access to a scanner/copier/printer and computer; adequate space for storing archival supplies (boxes, folders etc.); and file cabinets for PHA organizational archives. The workroom area would be visible to people in the entrance lobby and would provide visibility from all parts of the area into the research area for added security.

A separate research area would house the PHA reference collection and accommodate up to two researchers at a time with a computer terminal for accessing the catalog of PHA's holdings. There would be adequate space for archival research - a large table for safely using large items such as maps and large documents. The research area would be multi-functional space and would be used by staff when no researchers are present.

As currently envisioned, to minimize the size of the footprint of the new building, the facility would have two stories. All functions requiring public access would be on the first floor, including a handicap accessible lavatory.

As PHA moves forward in planning for building a new, attractive and traditionally designed research and collections facility, raising the needed funds will present a huge challenge. Look for future issues of *The Peacham Patriot* for updates.

### **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](mailto: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.

## **PHA Events Summer 2012**

### **Wednesday, July 4: Peacham Fourth of July Celebration**

Historical House and Blacksmith Shop will be open. The PHA Ghost Walk will feature Peacham women and their families during the Civil War. The program will start at 2:00 pm at the entrance to the Peacham Cemetery. Tickets: \$4.00 per person.

### **Sundays, July 8 to September 30, 2:00 - 4:00pm**

PHA Historical House opens for the season. The exhibit will commemorate Peacham Women During the Civil War and will display documents, photographs and memorabilia.

### **Saturday, July 14, 4:00 – 6:00pm: PHA Wine and Cheese Party**

Hosted by Dart Thalman at the Hand Schoolhouse in Green Bay. Tickets: \$20. 00 per person. Please contact Jutta R. Scott for details at 592-3262 or email [scottjutta2@gmail.com](mailto:scottjutta2@gmail.com)

### **Wednesday, August 1, 7:00pm: PHA Annual Meeting at the Congregational Church**

The Business Meeting starts at 7:00pm followed by the program: "He Says, She Says: A Shared 19<sup>th</sup> Century Diary." Lynn A. Bonfield will discuss the daily journal of Alfred and Chastina Walbridge Rix. Refreshments will be served after the program.

### **Sunday, August 26, 2:00 - 4:00pm Appreciation Reception at the Historical House.**

### **Thursday, October 4: Peacham Fall Foliage Celebration**

Historical House and Blacksmith Shop will be open. The PHA Ghost Walk will be held at 2pm. (See July 4 for program).

## **PHA Board 2011-2012**

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Order your copy of PHA's newest publication, *A Vermont Hill Town in the Civil War: Peacham's Story*. Visit the PHA website and obtain a softcover for \$25 and a hardcover for \$35, plus \$5 shipping.

## **Membership Support**

Your annual membership support is a critical investment in PHA and we depend 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.

## **Peacham Patriot • Summer 2012**

Peacham Historical Association  
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*The Peacham Patriot*, published twice each year, is a benefit of membership in the PHA. The editor is Jutta Scott, with assistance from Lynne Lawson, Mel Reis and Lorna Quimby.