

MHS Newsletter

The Marlow Historical Society
- P.O. Box 12, Marlow, NH 03456

Summer 2013

We join with many other historical associations in the United States to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War years, and we dedicate this issue to our Marlow forebears who sacrificed so much to preserve our precious country.

Dr. Marshall Perkins, Civil War Surgeon from Marlow

Dr. Marshall Perkins, one of Marlow's outstanding citizens, served in the Civil War as assistant surgeon in the Fourteenth N. H. Regiment. Surprisingly, his wife Harriett (Fiske) Perkins went to war with him as far as Washington, D.C., living for months in his officer's tent. The pair left several young children with Marshall's mother and sister in Croyden, N.H. We know this because they left letters now kept in the Hall Family Records in the Northern Illinois Regional History Center. We glimpse several Washington, D.C. outings, including visits to the Smithsonian and Congress, and the Perkins' domestic arrangements inside the Union camp. Harriett mentions seeing President and Mrs. Lincoln at a Washington social event and remarks that he is "pale and gaunt," but she is "as plump as a plum". When Marshall moves on to Virginia and then Georgia, Harriett returns to N.H. As the Civil War draws to and end and the surviving Union troops anxiously await their return home, Dr. Perkins' letters show keen observation of the political scene

In a letter to her sister-in-law, Martha, dated Dec. 19, 1863, Harriett describes her Washington, D.C. camp quarters: "The tent is about the size of your smallest chamber, nothing but canvass, but more comfortable than I should suppose it to be. An iron bed stands on one side. It looks quite genteel with its calico pillars and copperplate quilt and its rubber blanket over all. We have a three-legged stove to warm the room, a wood box, a chair covered with an old canvass bag. The sink consists of three rough boards nailed together. On that stands an old pail, and a tin dish and basin for washing. It's very comfortable, and I begin to feel quite at home. Marshall seems in good spirits." In another letter, dated Jan. 13, 1864, Harriett writes, "Marshall has gone to the Hospital. He is usually gone from between eight to ten or eleven [at night]. He gets quite tired every day."

Here is the introduction from the Marshall Perkins materials from the Hall Family Records whose literary rights are "dedicated to the public":

"Marshall Perkins, the son of James and Annie (French) Perkins, was born in Croydon, New Hampshire, on May 13, 1823. He was educated in the common schools and later at Dartmouth. He went on to study medicine and graduate from Cambridge Medical College. He moved to Marlow, New Hampshire where he worked as a physician and was an active member in his community and in the Republican party.



In 1852 Marshall married Harriett Adelaide Fiske, the daughter of Hon. Amos F. and Eliza (Stone) Fiske of Marlow. Marshall and Harriett had nine children: James Marshall, Annie E., Hattie F., Waldo H., Mattie, Daniel, Kate L., Charles A., and Jessie M. On September 23, 1862, at the time of the Civil War, Perkins placed aside his professional and personal considerations and enlisted in the 14th Regiment, New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry. He served just under three years and was mustered out on July 8, 1865. After his service, he went back to Marlow where he lived until his death on June 17, 1902 at age seventy-nine."

On Nov. 2, 1864, Dr. Perkins writes to Harriett from camp near Cedar Creek, Virginia. "It is a cold, rainy day. The whiskey ration has just been issued to the men. I have got through with the Surgeon's call in the 9th Com. and am sitting on a bag of oats with the Hospital knapsack on my lap, fingers numb with cold... For a few days hard bread and smoked hog has been our chief food. The hard bread we soak for a few hours, and then, after frying the hog, put in the hard tack and fry that. (Continued, Page Two)



This photo was taken in front of the M. E. Parsonage on Tinshop Pond. This home is currently owned by Richard Franks. The occasion was a "Party of Ladies' Aid held in honor of Mrs. Frye's birthday at M.E. Parsonage".

Left to right, back row: Olive Beckwith, Mrs. Powers, Frances Towne, Mrs. Honey, Mrs. Craigin

Front row: Miss. Sarah Phelps, Mrs. Sarah Lowell, Mrs. Leora Howard, Mrs. Elgin Jones, Mrs. Whittermore, Marian Perkins, Lula Towne (French), Miss. Kate Perkins, Grace Frye, Lizzie Brown, Harriett Perkins, Ellen Russell, Kate Brown, Rev. and Mrs. Frye

The Ladies' Benevolent Society of Marlow Supported Civil War Soldiers

(Source: Secretary's Book of The Ladies' Benevolent Society, Marlow, N.H.)

Founded in 1845, the Ladies' Benevolent Society Constitution spells out a seriousness of purpose. Art. 10: "The members of this Society shall meet once in two weeks at a place agreed upon and shall spend the afternoon in diligent labor."

The labor was for the purpose of clothing the poor.

Although the group varied in size over the years, often averaging forty or more women at a meeting, it was largest at its inception with 153 declared members. The initial annual dues was 12 cents a year in 1845, rising to 17 cents by the final meeting in 1887.

It is often difficult to know precisely what activities were undertaken because the Secretary (at first M. M. Smith, then Eliza Fiske, then L.P. Taggart, and finally, S. Abbie Burnap), noted over and over, "our usual activities." as years passed, there were references to clothes - making and quilting, particularly the Log Cabin quilt. One entry reads, "made two shirts and striped mittens." Another declares, "bought 1 1/2 pounds of yarn for mittens." There is no profane entertainment during their work sessions. There are no lawn parties or baked bean suppers or performers or recitations or skits. Those will come later after 1887 with the Dorcas Society.

During the Civil War, the Ladies' Benevolent Society supported the Union by knitting bandages for soldiers. They gathered bags of milkweed silk used to staunch wounds. No doubt some of the garments they made were sent along too.

May 1865 tells us: "The Benevolent Society has not had their regular meetings during the past year. It has been united with and under the name of The Soldiers' Aid Society." In 1866, they assumed their former name and began sending products of their charitable work to Indian Reservations in the South and West.

(Continued from Page One)

After that you will not wonder that I complain of dyspepsia....but the boys in the companies cannot do these things well, for they do not have flour or cooking utensils....My mule is a very useful animal to me. He carries furniture and shelter tent besides the hospital knapsack and filled case of instruments."

From Augusta Georgia in May, 1865, Marshall writes, "Dear Wife, Four months from the day our time will be up...Although I can see no necessity of so many troops now remaining here. But the fact is we have several generals who must have a certain number of troops to order about for a while longer. We have already been here ten days and all we have done is escort Jeff Davis through the city.... We have received no pay as yet. I still have twenty cents in my pocket and three postage stamps. Time is hanging rather heavily... Thoughts of home are constantly with all of us, and the time when we shall get there is the main subject of conversation. The city is still full of rebel officers and soldiers, the officers sporting their showy uniforms. But an order has been issued today for all to appear in citizens dress...also that all officers depart immediately to their homes, and, if found after twenty - four hours, they will be arrested. This must be rather humiliating to Southern chivalry. But I do not see as they can help themselves. As they have sown, so must they reap."

Had Abraham Lincoln lived, the South, in my opinion, would have received very different treatment from what it will now... All the Georgians whom I have heard speak of the murder appear to regret it and are of the opinion they are much worse off in Johnson's hands than they would have been in Lincoln's... The people in the North ought to send no more money to missionary lands for missionary purposes. Every dollar should be expended here. Not only is it needed among the blacks, but equally as much among the poor whites."

Dr. Marshall Perkins, a beloved Marlow physician, was honored by having Marlow's Sons of Veterans of the Civil War Association and Camp named after him. (Read about the camp flag in a separate article.)

Notes from the Archives: We were delighted to welcome four important visitors researching their family roots to Marlow.

Elizabeth Whitley and her mother Jean came all the way from Iowa. They are descendants of James Downing, who came to Marlow with his parents in 1794 and in 1840 built the Downing Mill on the Ashuelot River. Franklin Downing and his wife Mary Louisa Ware Downing are Elizabeth's great great grandparents. They are also related to the Huntleys through Lois Huntley Ayers. They visited the Village Cemetery, where many of their ancestors are buried, and took photos of the old homestead on Route 10. We found some documents for them in our archives, including a photograph of the mill, and a 1908 article about Hiram Downing, famous daguerreotype photographer born in Marlow in 1817.

Donna Winham came from Arizona. She was thrilled to find Huntley family graves at the West Yard Cemetery. (Continued, Page 4)

Marlow Civil War Muster Certificates and Ephraim Smith

We have in our archives a small bundle of slips of lined paper which are the actual enlistment receipts of some of Marlow's Civil War soldiers. They are only four inches by five inches. Each is entirely hand-written. Some are faded, and some are as clear as they day they were written. Why we have only a few and not all is a mystery. The receipts indicate the date of muster, which was mostly in September of 1862 and the place (Concord), and, in some cases, the unit - mostly the 14th NH (although one was for the 18th, and one man, Herman Farnum, had joined the Naval Service). These receipts sometimes tell who was to receive the bounty that was paid for enlisting. The enlistees from Marlow whose receipts we have are: Freeman H. Campbell, E.G. Huntley, William R. Dunham, Herman Farnum, Ira H. Gasset, J.C. Grandy, Henry Knight, Ora Munroe, Edward H. Wetherbee, Brannon Wilson, Rockwell B. Wilson, and Elbridge Smith.

Fortunately for us, the Historical Society of Cheshire County has several letters that Elbridge Smith wrote to his mother and sister during his term of service. Although he is recorded as a Marlow enlistee, his family lived in Gilsum, and he returned there after he was mustered out on account of disability.

These letters are full of fascinating glimpses of army life. Elbridge was an educated man; his letters are full of literary allusions and pithy quotes. His unit, the 14th, spent half of the war guarding prisoners and the city of Washington D.C. in Virginia and Maryland. Writing home in February of '63 from Maryland, Smith noted that they were "generally fat and healthy," but that would change as time went on. Diseases like mumps ravaged the troops, and every subsequent letter mentions who is ill, recovering, and who has recently died. Smith made special note of Dr. Marshall Perkins, who was a great favorite among the men: "Dr. Perkins visits the sick in tents in half the companies." Apparently the nurses could be a problem. Elbridge added that they were sometimes "rather too apt to take to whiskey bibbing, making rather free with the liquor intended for the sick."

Most of the letters mention rumors of troop movements, and the likelihood of their unit being moved soon. "It looks as though there will be fighting in many quarters soon," writes Smith somewhat apprehensively, though he also says, "For my part, would rather not see the war closed yet unless an honorable and lasting peace can be secured." By September 19, 1864 the NH 14th was indeed moved - into the Winchester Virginia area, to forestall the movements of Confederate General Jubal Early in the Shenandoah Valley, which threatened Washington D.C. and could possibly influence the upcoming presidential election. We surmise that Smith was wounded in late September, because the final letters in the collection are written from Finley Hospital in Washington, dated only two weeks after the 19th. It is possible Elbridge was wounded at the Third Battle of Winchester, which took place at that time. The 14th joined several other units in the Army of the Potomac at this engagement, and although they did keep Early from attacking, they paid a dear price, since casualties from these engagements were extremely high.

We know that Elbridge Smith was mustered out of the service on October 10 1863, and we also know from his sister Mary's letter that he was "very weak," and that she felt he would mend better once he was furloughed. She mentioned what a "sad sight" it was to "see the crippled and maimed" in the hospital with her brother. Fortunately for Smith, he did recover from his wounds, and lived a long and productive life as a farmer and civic leader in Gilsum. And fortunately for us, we have his letters as a window into the minds and hearts of those who sacrificed so much to preserve the Union.



Sons of Veterans of the Civil War Flag

In our museum, we have an American flag with 47 stars. It is designated "Sons of Veterans - Marshall Perkins Camp". Marshall Perkins from Marlow was the Assistant Surgeon of the New Hampshire 14th Regiment during the Civil War. (See article.) There are in New Hampshire "Sons of Veterans of the Civil War" units still active.

Johanna Kent suggested that we date the flag by discovering when the American flag had 47 stars. She learned that on January 6, 1912, Arizona became the 46th state and on February 14, 1912, New Mexico became the 48th state, so there we have it. The flag dates from the few weeks intervening between January 6, 1912 and February 14, 1912.

The veterans mustered and drilled regularly at these camps. Other than that, we know little about Marlow's Marshall Perkins' Camp. We would love to hear from anyone who knows about the location and activities of Sons of Veterans of the Civil War here in Marlow. Was it perhaps our "Musterfield" on Marlow Hill?

Pictured below, l to r: George Jefts, Joseph Lowell, Henry Sawyer, and ___ Kilgore





Marlow Historical Society

P.O. Box 12, Rte 123

Marlow, NH 03456

<http://marlowhistoricalsociety.org>

Hours: May - October

3rd Sunday of the month and by
appointment

MHS and NHHC Host a Presentation on Native History in NH, Dr. Robert Goodby



Dr. Robert Goodby, professor at Franklin Pierce University and active archeologist, presented a program on April 19th at 1:00 pm at Perkins School. Dr. Goodby held the students, faculty, and invited public spellbound as he described archeological practices and early Native history in New Hampshire. To illustrate, he projected diagrams and

photographs of his work with students from Franklin Pierce in what he termed his most exciting archeological site ever, the one recently discovered on the grounds of Keene Middle School.

After an initial find, the students dug rows of pits. These led to discovery of rough stone ovals that contained fire pits, chips and broken tools to evidence flint knapping along with a few weapon pieces, two of which suggest use of the atlatl or spear-throwing stick, used for thousands of years before bow and arrow. Charred remains of caribou and an otter bone were carbon dated to show a period roughly 12,000 years ago. This makes the site the earliest in New England. The stones they used came, perhaps through trade, from Maine and northern New Hampshire.

After the formal program, Dr. Goodby delighted all by demonstrating the atlatl outside, showing us how this tool helped a hunter throw a spear more than ten times further than he could with his arm alone. Dr. Goodby is an engaging speaker.

"Archives" (Continued, from Page Two)

Loisanne was able to show her two ancestral homes and the probable location of a third on Marlow Hill, the Rufus Wynham farm. We were able to share digital copies and prints of interest to her, including Winham, Craig, and Britton family items. She took many pictures and plans to return in July after further research.

John Gustin of Massachusetts also visited the family graves at the West Yard. His famous ancestor Samuel Gustin was the hero who in 1772 rode all the way from Baker's Corner to Portsmouth, in the middle of winter, to persuade Governor Wentworth to extend the town charter which he had threatened to terminate. At that time there were no bridges or roads in the area...only a few rough bridle paths. Read all about it in the Marlow History!

Stop by and visit the Museum this summer! It's on the second floor of the Methodist Chapel. We are open every 3rd Sunday, 10 to 12 p.m. and by appointment. Bring your Marlow history questions and we'll dig for the answers! For Information: 446-7421