From the President

Another year has passed and become history. We have had a successful year and have published a long awaited second cemetery book consisting of the Andersonville, West Glover, and French cemeteries. It contains the same format as the Westlook book with much genealogical information. We have also printed a second edition of Andersonville, the First 100 Years book.

The Runaway Pond Park access road is to be paved by the State next summer when they pave VT Rt. 16. The Glover Selectmen have graciously applied a six-inch gravel bed to the access road as requested by the State in preparation for the asphalt. All of this will benefit our plans for the 200th anniversary in June 2010 of the historic event of the pond running away. We are open to any comments and ideas as to what should be involved in a grand celebration. This coming June will leave only three years to finalize plans.

As previously mentioned in past newsletters, our Society rooms are open by appointment by calling 525-8855, or during the winter months 525-6212.

- Bob Clark

2007 Vermont History Expo Exhibit

Scooters, sleds and saucers: sliding down the hills of Glover by Joan F. Alexander

There hasn’t been much snow yet this winter, but that is not stopping us from thinking of one of the most popular winter activities: sliding! This year’s theme for the 2007 Vermont Historical Society’s Vermont History Expo at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds on June 23 and 24 is “Travel & Transportation: How Vermonters Got There from Here.” The Glover Historical Society’s exhibit will feature memories of sliding in Glover, one of the most fun ways to get from there to here.

The inspiration for the exhibit is a wooden traverse sled donated to the GHS a few years ago by Marion Darling Cubit. Marion remembers hearing her father tell about flying down the Sheffield Heights Road on that sled, all the way from the top of the (continued on page three)
Glover Historical Society goals for 2007

At the September 2006 GHS meeting (the last until April 2007), members compiled a list of to-dos for 2007. It’s ambitious!

* Have the plantings at Runaway Pond evaluated: what is weed, what is flower, what needs to be done? We want to begin sprucing up the place in preparation for the 200th Anniversary of the running away of Runaway Pond, which will be in June 2010.
* Museum acquisition work
* Queens of Hearts cards: make a full deck!
* Update Glover 911 map and republish
* Update website

* Spruce up the Glover room at the Old Stone House before the next Old Stone House Day in August 2007.

Not a member? Please join us!

As you will note from our financial report, our coffers are getting slim! We hope you will consider joining if you are not already a member. The cost of becoming a member of the Glover Historical Society is not very much, but dues money does add up and helps the GHS continue to preserve and share Glover’s past. Please join and support our efforts.

Museum organizing: we are ready to roll!

This fall the GHS purchased a computer software program to help us keep a database organized record of all the museum acquisitions. After checking with other historical societies and with Glover’s own Darlene Young, who has a wealth of museum collections experience, we chose Past Perfect, a museum collection management program. It wasn’t cheap (over $600), but we did get a 20% discount by ordering it with a bulk order through the Vermont Gallery and Museum Alliance. Also, we ordered about $300 worth of archival, acid-free tissue, folders and boxes so that we can preserve more of our collections in safe ways. However, one of our preservation efforts was absolutely free! One of the three museum rooms did not have window coverings, and in the archival world, light is the biggest culprit. But now, thanks to Pearl and John Urie’s donation of some drapes they had, Harriet King’s work at the sewing machine, and Don Atkins hanging the hardware, the room is light free when it needs to be!

This spring, we hope to start tackling the next steps in our organizational work, which will be making a list of everything in the museum, checking it against the entries in our acquisition book, entering each item into the software program, and making sure each item is stored properly. Want to help? It would be a wonderful chance to see Glover’s past. Please call Joan Alexander if you are interested. There will likely be day and nighttime work bees.

Website update

If you log on to the Glover Historical Society site (www.gloverhistoricalsociety.org) you will not notice any new postings, but rest assured, things are happening. Your secretary, Joan Alexander, has had a tutorial in how to update the site and, time willing, things should begin to happen! But if you have not yet checked the site out, do! There is plenty to see and read about Glover and the GHS.

Glover History
A semiannual publication of the Glover Historical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 208, Glover, VT 05839
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Vice President .............. Betsy Day
Secretary .............. Joan Alexander
Treasurer ............... Michael Ladd
Additional Board Members:
Martha Alexander, Eleanor Bailey, Jean Borland,
Gisele Clark, Harriet King,
Randy Williams

Thanks to Lucy Smith for compiling our mailing list and keeping it up to date.
Heights to Glover Village, right through the Lower Village before it petered out of momentum! The sled was made by her grandfather Laban Darling who was a blacksmith. The sled is in some need of repair today, but when you see the metal runners, pegged and nailed wood joints and worn wood, 6 and a half feet long (!), you can imagine those trips! We are hoping others will remember their adventures on sleds, toboggans, scooters and saucers down Glover’s hills. Our exhibit will showcase actual sleds, photos and the tales of the trips folks have taken with them.

Jean Borland shared what may be Glover’s earliest recorded reference to sliding, written by Civil War soldier Dan Mason who was home on leave in December 1863. On Christmas Day he wrote in his diary, “Emily and I went to Mr. Perkin’s donation. Had a good time sliding on the ice by moonlight with the fair ones.” (Jean believes “the fair ones” referred to Dan’s sister Emily and his own sweetheart, Harriet Clark, whom he married.)

What are your sledding memories? Students at the Glover Community School will be gathering sledding stories, mapping some of the most popular sliding spots and traditions through the years, and, hopefully, compiling a “Sled Museum” at the school. We would like to photograph any sleds or other sliding contraptions you may have in your attics or barns. Hopefully we will have enough snow by the end of the project to have a sliding party at school for all those who have shared their stories for the project.

We’d love to add your sliding memories to our exhibit! Where did you slide? On what? With whom? What was your favorite kind of sled? What is your favorite sliding memory? Happiest trip? Scariest trip? Give GHS Secretary Joan Alexander a call (525-6212) if you have a story or photograph to share, or a sled, scooter or saucer we could photograph, or borrow for the Sled Museum at school or our Expo exhibit. If you live far from town, please jot down your memories and send them to the GHS at P.O. Box 208, Glover, VT 05839. We hope to have all memories gathered by the end of April 2007.

Queens of Hearts Project still collecting Queens

Do you know a Glover woman, past or present, whom you would like to honor with a “Queen of Hearts” title? Blank forms are available at the Town Clerk’s office, along with a notebook of completed cards for about 30 Glover women from three different centuries. Several more cards are in the works now, and we hope to fill the book with a full deck! Please call Joan Alexander (525-6212) if you have questions.
Glover’s Civil War places by Joan F. Alexander

Last fall Vermont historian and author Howard Coffin stopped in Irasburg to talk with folks about his current project. Coffin is traveling around the state, urging people to document places in their towns that are connected to the Civil War. Places might include the building where men signed up, or a house where a Gettysburg veteran lived out the rest of his life. Coffin hopes to compile a book that would list and describe all these Civil War spots.

Members of the Glover Historical Society have been working to compile Glover’s list. Here is what we have gathered so far. Please let us know if you know of something we have omitted. Please contact GHS Secretary Joan Alexander at P.O. Box 208, Glover, VT 05839 if you have additions for the list.

1. The Union House, Glover St., Glover Village (now a nursing home, then an inn) Recruits signed up here, at a desk that is now at the Old Stone House Museum in Brownington. After the war, this is where the GAR Post No. 16 (Mason Post) and the Women’s Relief Corps (Erastus Buck Relief Corps) regularly met until they disbanded in the 1930s.

(I remember reading an interesting account of Gen. Grout (from St. Jay or Danville?) walking all over the county trying to enlist but always arriving too late to sign up. Finally after walking all night he did make it to the Union House in Glover, and went on to become a general. –J.A.)

2. The Old Stone House Museum, Brownington, VT. Here in the Glover Room, you can see the desk that was in the Union House where Union recruits signed on. Also there is a U.S. flag that was purchased by the town of Glover in 1883, and presented that same year to the Mason Post No. 16, GAR of Glover. Glover’s poet laureate, Harry Almanzo Phillips, carried this flag in his role as color bearer for the Post for almost 30 consecutive years, and in Memorial Day parades until his last parade in 1940 or 1941. When the GAR post disbanded in the 1930s, an “Official” came to claim the property belonging to the Post, but Fred D. Percival, an associate member of the Post and a Glover resident, protested and insisted that the flag stay in Glover. Mr. Phillips wrote a short poem about the flag that is with his collection of poems at the GHS museum.

3. Westlook Cemetery, just south of Glover Village at the junction of Rt. 16 and Rt. 122. There are 12 graves at Westlook of soldiers who died in the Civil War (in battle, hospitals or prisons) and 52 in all who were soldiers. You will notice their GAR flag holders and flags near their stones. One of the 52 was a New Hampshire Volunteer, one a Maine Volunteer and one from Sheffield, Vermont, but the other 49 were all Glover boys and men. The following are men whose stone inscriptions refer to their Civil War duty with more than just Company and Regiment listings:

- Dan Mason gravestone monument. Dan Mason, who lived on a farm at the end of a road that broke off to the left of at the foot of the Dexter Mountain road (identified as the MH Mason place on the 1878 Beers map), enlisted Oct. 15, 1861 and served until his death (of “fever”) near Brownsville, TX on Nov. 20, 1865, at 26 years. He was Captain, Co. H, 19th Infantry “of a colored regiment” in Texas. The Percival history states, “It may be worth while to add
that Capt. Dan Mason and Alex Davis after their promotion were with their Co. at the attack on Peters-
burg when the experiment of the exploding a mine was tried...."

Mason fought in 16 battles, including Gettysburg, and all the battles are listed on one side of his obelisk monument. The GAR Post in Glover was named in honor of him.

While home on leave in 1864, Dan married his sweetheart Harriet Clark, of West Glover, who lived in West Glover in the home now owned by Skip and Judy Borrell (identified as the J Clark place on the 1878 Beers map).

Contact Jean Borland, Borland Road, West Glover, if you are interested in more about Dan Mason. Jean’s husband was descended from Mason, and she has access to Mason’s Civil War diary, letters, photos and other information.

- **Willard Leonard gravestone**: died August 31, 1864, at 47 years, in Andersonville Prison, Georgia. His cause of death is listed in Glover’s vital records as “cruelty and starvation.”

- **Chester Bogue gravestone** Died at New Orleans, 7th Reg., Co. H” died Oct. 1862

- **Oscar Bogue gravestone** Died at New Orleans, 7th Reg., Co. H” died Oct. 1862

- **Carlos Drew gravestone** 19 years old, died at Brandy Station, VA, Co. D 6th Reg.

- **WH Chamberlin gravestone** died in Charles ton, SC in 1864 (Co. F, 11th Reg)

- **Carlos Dwinell gravestone** died Aug. 24, 1864 at Baltimore, of wounds received at Charleston, VA (Major, 6th Reg.)

- **Samuel Forsyth gravestone** (Co. D, 6th Reg.) died at Battle of the Wilderness with Co. I, 1st Vt Cavalry

- **Simeon Metcalf gravestone** died 1862, at age 19, in VA (Co. I, 1st Vt. Cavalry)

- **William Hibbard gravestone** died Nov. 4, 1863 in Leavenworth, KS, at 31 years

- **Spencer C. Phillips** died and buried in Alexan-
dria, VA in 1863

- **Orange S. Williams gravestone** died Aug. 30, 1862 at 22 years, at Newark NJ (Co. D, 6th Reg)

- **William Dwyer gravestone** died 1912, age 70; Co. D, 3rd Regiment. Though there is no mention of more Civil War information on Dwyer’s stone, he does have an interesting association that we know of. Pvt. Wm. Dwyer was a member of the 12-man firing squad charged with carrying out the execution order against Pvt. William Scott of Groton, the “Sleeping Sentinel,” who was spared after his mother implored a pardon from President Lincoln. (Dwyer was actually a Sheffield resident at the time of his death.) He had been chosen to be on the firing squad because he was a fellow member with Pvt. Scoot of Capt. D.G. Kenneson’s Co. D, 3rd Regiment.

A newspaper clipping from the *Caledonian Record* (undated, but assumed to be from the late 1900s) also adds that Dwyer was living in Salem (now called Derby) and had to walk from Newport to St. Johnsbury in order to enlist because there was no railroad in the state north of St. Johnsbury. He enlisted June 1, 1861, and was discharged at Burlington, July 27, 1864. He fought at Bull Run, Savage Station, Antietam, Williamsburg, Fredericks-Gettysburg Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Petersburg, Cedar Creek, Fisher’s Hill and Vicksburg. On discharge, he was able to ride the train to Barton, as the rail line had been extended during his service. Dwyer was a “scout for the Army, and at times wouldn’t see the main body of his Company for two weeks at a time. He would be ahead scouting the land.” (from handwritten note on the *Caledonian* newspaper clipping.)

John Holloway (see previous paragraph) survived the war, but thirty years later, in March 1895, was murdered after a dance at the home of G.F. Heath in Glover. His vital record lists strychnine poisoning as the cause of death. The Orleans County Monitor’s story (March 8, 1895) gives this account:

“Was it a Murder? On Friday, night last, there was a dance at the residence of GF Heath, attended by quite a number of junketing people, among the number being J. Ellsworth Holloway, better known as ‘El’ Holloway, his wife, her paramour, one Chase, and others. There was some liquor in use, and about midnight Holloway got so far over the dam….”

The story goes on to state that Holloway was found dead two hours later, and that “Chase and Mrs. Holloway are under arrest.” However, the next week’s issue of the Monitor makes a serious correction: “It was James Gilman, not Chase that was held by the town authorities with Mrs. Holloway.” This report goes on to say that when the autopsy was done, the body was “in a condition that indicated he had a great aversion to soap and water….” The following week’s article states, “The correspondent of the Monitor and doctors disclaim being responsible to the soap and water business in the item.” (What finally happened to Mrs. Holloway and her paramour was not researched.) (The 1878 Beers map shows an E. Holloway living by Daniels Pond, just after the first bend on what today is called Salmon Place.)

4. Andersonville Cemetery, Andersonville Road, West Glover

One grave of a Civil War soldier is here: Robert White (Co. I, 15th Reg)

Andersonville Cemetery: A Legend: At the Andersonville Cemetery is also the grave of David Fleming, died May 13, 1862, born Feb. 19, 1829. Ann Wilson of Craftsbury related this family story to J.A. (Nov. 14, 2006) that as a young girl going for rides with her dad, Earl Wilson of Craftsbury, and her dad always remembering, “Well, there’s old Dave Fleming’s stone; I wonder who’s under that stone.” Ann always remembered hearing that remark, but never stopped to question it until she was a little older. One day she asked him, “What did you mean?”

He told her that David Fleming had gotten in some altercation, either shot someone or killed someone, and ended up in the Irasburg jail. He complained to the jailer that the blackbirds were waking him up too early in the morning, and asked for a shotgun to take care of them. The jailor obliged (This part sure sounds a little implausible; he must have trusted him!), and came back to the cell after hearing a shot, shouted, “Oh my gosh, David Fleming has killed himself!” Fleming left in a coffin, and was buried in Andersonville. (He and his wife, Margaret Gilmour, were both Scotland natives living in the Andersonville area of Glover.)

Here the story jumps to Earl’s grandfather, who was a Union soldier who helped work with the horses, not a cavalryman himself, but responsible for caring for the horses. (He was at Gettysburg.) One day he ran into Amos Macomber of Craftsbury, another Union soldier whom he knew.

“I’ve just seen David Fleming,” Amos told Earl. Couldn’t be, Earl declared, he’s dead. No, Amos insisted, that had all been just a hoax. The jailor had arranged for Flanders to leave if he promised to leave town and join the army, and he had. (I tried to search for information from the local newspaper, but Fleming’s death is not mentioned. Curiously, neither is there a death record for Fleming in 1862 in the vital records for Glover. No one else in Glover had ever heard this story, but all agree it is fascinating! –J.A.)

5. West Glover Cemetery, Cemetery Loop, Glover


6. Glover Historical Society Museum, 51 Bean Hill Road, Glover Village, located upstairs at the Glover Municipal Building, open by appointment. At the museum are the following Civil War related items:

- Veteran GAR Civil War medal or decoration
- Civil War (?) belt, leather with brass buckle, with letters “US” on buckle
- Item # 91.22.17 Letter written October 12, 1862 on stationery that is headed “The Girl I left Behind” from “directions Thomas B. Mitchell, Co.
Thompson served in the Vt. Vol., Co. B, 3rd Reg., was wounded twice. John’s younger brother Samuel was killed while they fought side by side in May 1864 at the Spotsylvania Court House. John had mustered out of the war in July 1865 and “battle weary,” returned to Glover. In 1869, he married a Glover girl, Alma Stone. Alma grew up on Bear Call Road where Roz Gittleman now lives, and was a sister to Elijah Stone, another Glover Civil War veteran. In 1871 the Thompsons moved to Kansas to take advantage of the Homestead Act. John and Alma built a dugout home, where Alma started the first public school in the town (then Eldorado, now called Bushton) in her home. They had three children. Alma came home from Kansas to visit her family in Glover in 1891, and upon her return to Kansas, wrote a letter to Elijah describing the Gettysburg Cyclorama Exhibition she had stopped off to see in Chicago on her way back. She wrote: “… I found out there was a place in the City where the Battle of Gettiesburg [sic] was shown in picture like you and Augustus was talking about. I went to see it. The admittance was .25. I thought it was about the grandest thing I ever saw. There was some brush scattered on the ground and I could hardly tell where the picture commenced.” Thompson had been chronically ill and despondent after the war, and was found dead in Plum Creek near his Kansas home in 1891. In 1985, Richard Clem, a Civil War buff from Maryland was using a metal detector at a battlefield near Funkstown, Maryland, and found Thompson’s identification tag, which was about the size of a quarter, and stamped with “J.S. THOMPSON, Co. B, 3rd REG., VT. VOL., GLOVER.” Clem then went on to research Thompson’s life. Clem says finding the ID tag is what “many relic hunters would call ‘the ultimate discovery.’”

Do you have something to add to this list? Please let us know!
“Dies from Shotgun Discharge”: the story of Oscar Shute by Joan F. Alexander

I grew up hearing about Oscar Shute, the hired man who died on my dad’s farm more than 15 years before Dad was even born. The Alexander-Aldrich farm was at the end of a long winding dirt road so secluded it was called “Lover’s Lane” when my dad, Wayne Alexander, was born there in 1926. In fact, their farm was the only place on that road off Route 16, just south of Glover Village.

Blood stains on the chimney

Dad and his five siblings used to play in the shed and dared each other to climb up the narrow steps that led to the vacant rooms that once had served as an apartment for the hired hand. The chimney was against one side of the stairs, and the kids were certain the dark, splotchy drips on the brick were the dried blood of Oscar Shute. (As adults, they came to realize what they had imagined to be Oscar’s blood may really have been only creosote, though one remembered blood on the old beams as well.) When their cousins came to visit, they too would be dared to climb the stairs. One cousin, Rod Wells, remembered being there in the shed and looking up at the stairs and feeling it was “spooky.” Rod’s mom, Edith Alexander Wells, was in the house the day of Oscar’s death. Though she was only three years old, the event was such a traumatic happening that she still remembered it, over 80 years later.

The story as Dad told it was that one September day back in 1910, Oscar Shute had come home drunk after being at the Barton Fair, got in an argument with his wife upstairs in their apartment over the shed, and wound up somehow shooting himself and falling down the stairs (hence the “blood” ending up on the chimney). When Dad told the story, we children were enthralled. (No one had ever died at our own childhood home, much less from a gunshot wound.) Now it was a summer home, with the barn, ice house, sugar house, shingle mill, and all the other outbuildings long gone, and the fields all grown up. The house still stood, virtually unchanged from the way it looked when our family last lived there. The few times we drove up to the old home farm, which the family had lost during the Depression, we would grow quiet thinking about the gunshot death on the stairs and the dripping blood, wondering if Oscar’s spirit still might be haunting this place.

Fast forward to 1985. Now I am an adult, teaching in Irasburg, living in Barton. My dad was researching his “roots” and, since I was living right in his old neck of the woods, he asked if I would help by searching through weekly issues of the Orleans County Monitors on microfilm at the Jones Memorial Library in Orleans, and look for info on different branches of our family. It proved to be a wonderful task, with fascinating stories contained in the Glover town correspondent’s reports. But with exactly 100 years to plow through, it was a labor-intensive job, and so, out of necessity, I developed a pretty efficient groove. I would pop in the roll, wind quickly ahead past the front page of each issue to page 4 where (usually) the town news items appeared, and scan down the Glover and West Glover columns for any tidbits about the Salmons, Perrons, Aldriches, or Alexanders. Occasionally articles on the front page would grab my attention as I whizzed the film along.
Newspaper account of the death

“Dies From Shotgun Discharge” was one that caught my eye, as accounts of violent deaths were rare enough. It headlined a front-page article of the September 14, 1910 issue. I read on, and was astonished to see Oscar Shute’s name. The story from our family legend, that I had half-thought might have little or no truth behind it, was indeed fact. Oscar Shute was not just a made-up story.

The newspaper account did confirm the Barton Fair part of the story, and that Oscar had been intoxicated. But even the news account of his death reported within a week of when it happened did not reveal all the details. As the article stated, “The real facts will never be known.”

I copied down the article and read it to my father over the phone. So began another chapter in the story of the shooting of Oscar Shute. My dad, armed with the newspaper account, began discussing it with his siblings and speculating on what might have actually transpired that September day. More details of what each remembered being told were shared. Dad talked with Aunt Edith, now in her eighties, to see what she remembered. (If you recall, she was the little three-year-old girl who had been in the house that day.)

Aunt Edith had pleasant memories of Oscar; she remembered that he often talked to her. “I think he was a good man, but every fair time, he would get drunk,” she recalled. “…He had been drinking and he came back. I remember I was playing on his lap. Mother knew he’d been drinking, so she called me downstairs. And when I was downstairs, he started fighting with his wife and he shot himself somehow…. His wife was just a little tiny thing. I remember her being downstairs and Mother holding her in her arms and rocking her to try and quiet her hysterics.” Aunt Edith’s recollections were the only on-the-scene account my generation had ever heard firsthand, and even those, as she herself admitted, were slim. “I was only three years old, so my memory is kind of sketchy.”

When my father shared the newspaper account with her, telling her that the final pronouncement had been that he shot himself in the back of his head, she paused to consider it. “I suppose if you’re drunk and you carried your gun (she held her hands up as if holding a gun above her head), you could. I never heard anything about it, except that he got shot.”

When Dad shared the information from the newspaper report with his older brother Warren, Warren was incredulous about the part about being shot in the back of the head, as he had always understood that the death was from suicide. “In the back of the head?” he repeated, pondering it. “It must have had a bent barrel,” he mused. (Joseph Alexander, Warren and Wayne’s father, was eight at the time of Oscar’s death, and the oldest child in the family, so one might assume that perhaps he remembered the day the most
accurately of the three Alexander children, though Warren said that his dad didn’t talk about it much. (Though the kids seemed to have talked about it plenty!)

Warren remembered the story being that Oscar had come home from the fair “pretty drunk” and was abusing his wife in their upstairs apartment, and so Edwin Alexander, his employer and Edith’s father, had gone up and told him to stop the commotion, and told him that it was time to do chores. “Just as [Edwin] was going downstairs, a shotgun went off, right over his head, and it didn’t take but one bound to get out! Grampa stopped, and heard something dripping. His first thought was ‘The fool shot a hole in the vinegar barrel’, which used to be up there.” But then, he had quickly realized that it wasn’t vinegar dripping, it was blood.

Dad had also questioned his Uncle Erwin Alexander Aldrich, Edith’s older brother, who would have been six at the time. Uncle Alec’s version had a slightly different twist. When Oscar came home from the fair, he had held and played with Aunt Edith a little bit, and then went upstairs to his apartment. Soon there was such a commotion of hollering that Alec’s mother, Francena Aldrich Alexander had gone up to try to quiet things down, and soon was joined by her husband Edwin, who had heard the fracas from the barn. Edwin flew up the stairs to find Oscar abusing Grace. After more commotion, Oscar ran and grabbed a shotgun that was always kept next to the butter room window (for shooting birds in the garden) and shot himself in the head.

**What really happened?**

Over 75 years after the fact, everyone in our family began speculating on what might have happened. After all, it seemed unlikely that a person could shoot himself in the back of the head, especially when drunk. Adding to the mystery was the line in the newspaper that the gun had discharged “accidentally or otherwise.” What could be a more plausible story?

Theories abounded. Some said maybe Oscar, crazed by drink, had threatened his wife, and she had either killed him accidentally while trying to wrestle the gun away from him, or killed him in self defense. When the Selectmen and State’s Attorney showed up to investigate, I imagined something like the scene in *To Kill a Mockingbird* when the sheriff decides it’s best to cover up the murder of a man knowing it was a murder done to protect an innocent person. Others speculated that Edwin might have shot Oscar to protect Oscar’s wife from harm, or because Oscar was threatening to kill him. Had there been a tussle trying to get a loaded gun away from intoxicated Oscar and Oscar was killed accidentally? Instead of clearing up the story once and for all, the newspaper account seemed only to enhance the legend and the stories.

Not long after, another story of Oscar surfaced. My brother Peter’s wife, Jeanne Allendorf’s grandfather (got all that?) Dan Dyer had grown up in Albany, Vermont. High up in the hills behind the Dyer farm was an area of town called Shutesville (still called Shutesville today) where Oscar’s family had lived. Dan was just a young boy when this story of Oscar and the pitchfork happened. Dan grew up to be a teacher, then principal then superintendent of schools. Once when taking a Vermont history course in the 1970s, Dan recorded his memories of the pitchfork incident which had happened just two years before Oscar’s death. When my dad and Dan were talking one day, they realized they both had stories of the same Oscar Shute, and soon Dad a copy of the story Dan had written.
The Pitchfork Story

Dan Dyer’s story was titled, “Watch Out There, Oscar!” (This story, too, was confirmed with a front page Monitor article, this one titled “Stabbed with Pitchfork,” dated August 12, 1908.) Dan gives Oscar Shute an alias in his story, calling him Oscar Sims, but anyone who lived in Albany and knew Oscar would have known who he was talking about, for Dan’s physical description of him was dead-on: “a slim, six foot four inch bachelor, approaching his 30th birthday.” Dan also gives an alias last name to the stabber as well as the “stabee,” changing Oliver’s last name from to Martin to Manson.

Dan’s story of Oscar and the pitchfork continues:

“Oscar was...a resident of the hill country and one of a large family. He appeared to be very contented to stay around his parents’ home while his brothers and sisters flew the coop and fended for themselves. Nevertheless, Oscar would work for short durations at jobs that held appeal for him. They include the spring log drive on the Black River, a few days at a big sap run, a short spell at sprint’s work, a week to ten days during haying season with no barn chores such as milking and now more than three days cutting corn with a sickle.

“This last activity appealed to him very much. Because of his great height and long reach he could beat all competitors to the end of the long rows of corn. He greedily cherished his employer’s praise for such prowess.

“Oscar was a sort of a dandy. He would dress up, perfume his breath with Sen-sens, hop into his dad’s Ryan Rattler buggy and drive the family’s Morgan mare at a fast clip down the hilly roads to the village.

“Although Oscar had slim reason for going to the village as often as he did he would defend such excursions by saying he had to pick up the mail. Needless to say the mail was very meager except when his dad’s monthly pension check came. Of course Oscar was always on hand for any dances, local or traveling shows and other community affairs and entertainments.

“Usually when Oscar arrived at the village he would drive the mare slowly about the few streets and finally stop in front of Roscoe’s store. There he would proudly exhibit his well-groomed animal, the highly polished buggy and harness and especially the expensive rawhide whip which stood straight up from its socket on the dashboard, displaying its many polished metal ferrules.

“Several of the older spectators must have wondered how Oscar’s part-time employment income could support his various social activities and allow him so much free time.

“Evidently he possessed a faculty for getting his dad to ‘lend’ him a portion of his monthly Civil War pension. He also had an aptitude for locating picnics and farmer get-togethers such as ‘last of haying’ celebrations to which he would invite himself, partake freely of the fare and also cast his eye at the ladies present. Since Oscar was neat, took good care of this clothes and saw to it that he did few farm chores that might produce ‘barn smell’ his presence at these events was tolerated.”

Dan goes on to relate that one August day (he remembers it as 1910, but the newspaper account places it in 1908), a neighbor hurriedly pulled her
horse into their driveway, and shrieked, “Mame, Mame!” calling to Dan’s mother. “Oliver Manson has committed murder. He drove a pitchfork through Oscar Sim’s neck. Yes, sir, right through both jugular veins and pinned him to the door!”

“It was not until nightfall, after the farm chores were done, that we learned more about the fracas at Burton’s farm. Oliver had indeed stabbed Oscar in the neck with a pitchfork. However, the wound was superficial, the jugular vein was untouched and after treatment by the local physician Oscar was back on his feet.

“The story finally came out that on that fateful Saturday Oscar had informed a crony that a ‘1st day’ haying event was to take place at Burt’s farm. Hiram was about Oscar’s age but much smaller and less aggressive. He generally had some liquor on hand and as much free time as Oscar had. Together they headed for the celebration at Burton’s farm hoping for a little excitement.”

It seems that Oliver had been helping with the haying at his brother Burton’s when he noticed Burton running toward the house. Oliver figured something was wrong for Burton to leave the hay wagon and horses so suddenly, so he headed up to the house himself, with his pitchfork still in his hand. What Burton and his son Allie came upon was a fracas in the kitchen, as Allie later told Dan’s mother.

“When Pa and I got to the kitchen doorway we saw Oscar a shakin’ Uncle Burton something awful and a cuffin’ him about the ears. Cousin Marcel rushed to help his dad. When he did Oscar drewed off and struck Marcel and knocked him flat, then Zuber picked him up. As I said, Pa was standing in the kitchen doorway. He was leaning just a bit on his fork. The end of the handle was on the floor and the times were straight up. You know, Mame, them tines are peaked and very sharp. All at once Oscar swung Uncle Burton around near where Pa and I stood in the kitchen doorway. You know Oscar is very tall. He’s a lot taller than Uncle Burton.

“Now, when he swung Uncle Burton around near Pa, Oscar, being tall, ketched his neck on one of them sharp tines of Pa’s fork. The very second it happened I heard Pa say very loud, ‘Look out thar, Oscar. You’re on my fork.’ That’s the way it happened, Mame, ’cause I was there.”

Dan tells how Oliver immediately panicked and ran off to his own home, packed some food and belongings, and struck out on foot for the Vermont Canadian border, some 25 miles away, to be free of any US warrant for his arrest.

“Most of the mountain and valley people who were acquainted with Oliver felt that he never should have run away. It was the general opinion that he was simply trying to save his brother from rough and humiliating treatment at the hands of a strong, young show-off. At any rate the law enforcement officials did not attempt to bring charges against him…. Within two days following the stabbing incident. Oliver’s eldest daughter, Sarah, came to our house and informed Mom that she and the rest of the family would be going to Canada within a week’s time. “The departure was made possible with the help of neighbors and Uncle Burton who transported the family and their meager belongings to the railroad station.

“The family never returned to Vermont. It was later reported that Oliver soon became gainfully employed and the family’s living conditions were markedly better than when they were on the stony hill farm.

“Oscar, on the other hand, became sort of a self-styled hero for a short while, as he exhibited his stab wound to all who gave the slightest inkling of being interested. I will remember such an occasion in front of Roscoe’s store. There was quite a large group looking on. Bert Shanks, the very respected town jack-of-all-trades, took a good look at it.

“‘Hell, Oscar,’ he said. ‘That’s only a little pin prick. I thought you to hurt.’

“After that judgment the whole affair seemed to fade quietly into oblivion.”
The newspaper account of the pitchfork incident is slightly different. In the newspaper account Martin is arrested, with hearing held the next day and the case set to continue on August 25. (Perhaps it was after the first hearing that Oliver fled to Canada.) The newspaper article ends with: “Shute was bleeding internally. The doctors stopped the flow of blood, and Shute now appears to be gaining; it is expected he will recover. Wine and women are said to be the cause of the fight.” Less than a month later (September 19, 1908), Oscar was mentioned in a short item in the Albany news column: “Oscar Shute has so far recovered from his injuries as to go to his friends in Craftsbury.” Perhaps the incident spurred him to finally “fly the coop.” Two years later he was living with a wife and young child at the Alexander farm in Glover, holding down a full-time job. His days of dandying around, doing piece-meal work here and there, seemed to be over.”

**All because of a T-shirt!**

Now, fast forward again to the summer of 2005. My cousin Alexander Strong, who lives in California, was home visiting his mom, Becky Munson, Dad’s sister, in Colchester. He was going to garage sales in the area, and followed signs that led to a house in Essex Center. Alex just happened to be wearing his Glover Day T-shirt and that prompted a comment from the man outside the house. “Are you from Glover?” Alex explained that he wasn’t, but that his mom grew up in Glover, and that he had been to the Glover Day celebration that year.

“Well, I had a great uncle who lived in Glover.” Alexander and the man, Bruce Clark, began exchanging details, and before long realized that their families were entwined. Bruce’s great uncle had been none other than Oscar Shute. Bruce went inside the house and came out with a photo of Oscar and the same “Dies of Shotgun Discharge” newspaper clipping that our family had.

Just last month, I visited Bruce Clark and his wife, Mimi. They took up genealogy after Bruce’s retirement from IBM. Bruce discovered a cousin living in Winooski who had lots of family photos, including one of Oscar as a dashing young man, and one of Oscar and his wife, Grace. It was so exciting and interesting for me to finally put a real face to the mythic Oscar Shute. I was struck by how handsome he was, and how much Dan Dyer’s description of him matched his photo: so tall, confident, and a dandy dresser. Mimi and Bruce believe the photo of Oscar and Grace together is their marriage photo. Even though that photo is quite dark, I was entranced to see pictures of Oscar and Grace.

**More memories, more theories**

And just when you think you have heard all the details to be heard, something else pops up. Just last month, my Aunt Becky told me a part I had never heard before.

Becky remembers her mother telling her that when Oscar came home from the fair he had gone to the barn to help with chores, but that he was so inebriated his gait was impaired and milk was sloshing out of the pails as he tried to carry them. Edwin ordered him to get out of the barn. Being banished from the barn had angered Oscar so much that he had taken his gun and told his wife he was going to shoot Edwin, and a struggle with the gun ensued. (This version supports the “at some slight provocation became angry” note in the newspaper article.) Becky also told me that my Aunt Eleanor, one of Becky’s older sisters, always loved to read, and as a girl loved to steal away to an attic room for some peace and quiet. Ellie loved to read the letters stored in an old trunk in the attic and one day was reading one written to Edwin Alexander, her grandfather.

Before he married Francena and became a farmer, Edwin had been the minister in Glover, and sometimes still filled in at the pulpit when needed. The writer of the letter was admonishing Edwin: how could he get up in the pulpit and preach after what
he’d done? Ellie’s mom discovered her reading the letter and took it away telling her it was all rubbish, and not even worth reading. Becky thinks this letter was probably written by someone who believed Edwin had been the one who had shot Oscar. Becky remembers that when she first moved to Chittenden County after marrying, a Rawleigh salesman had come to the door. The salesman turned out to be a relative of Oscar Shute. He told her that he always thought Edwin Alexander had shot Oscar. Picturing Edwin, it is hard to imagine Oscar being intimidated by Edwin: Edwin was only 5’5” tall and “wouldn’t weigh 110 pounds wringing wet with an overcoat on,” as his daughter once remarked. But, if Oscar knew of Edwin’s reputation for being a star wrestler while a student at Stanstead College, maybe Edwin would have given even Oscar reason to pause. “He was as strong as a bull for a little man. There was no limit to his strength,” Warren remembered.

The plot thickens: yet another theory

After meeting with Mimi and Bruce, there was yet another detail and version to consider. They had copies of the Civil War pension request filed by Oscar’s mother, Addie Lanpher Shute, who was separated from Oscar’s father, Nathan. One of Oscar’s eleven siblings, a younger sister, Beatrice Shute LaDuke, had written to the pension office on behalf of her mother, supporting her mother’s request to receive half of Nathan’s pension.

In her deposition, dated March 6, 1914, she wrote that her parents had separated because of her mother siding with her oldest son, George, rather than with Nathan. “I asked him why he left and he said that it was on account of my brother George. He told me that he told mother that she could choose between him and George and that he told him she would take her boy.” The sister explains that she didn’t ask more questions at the time because she was upset about the separation and “Then, too, I had just lost my favorite brother Oscar and I don’t know how I kept up.”

Her deposition continues: “Oscar had shot himself after he had been drinking liquor given him by George. I think that he had intended to shoot somebody else and then himself, but he fell and was found mortally wounded at the foot of the stairs with his gun under him. I think that he intended to shoot Grace or George, but I don’t think that they were intimate. George thought a great deal of her and right after Oscar’s death wanted to marry her, but she didn’t care for him.” George himself had lost his wife, Winnie Demeritt, a little over a year earlier. Grace moved back to Sugar Notch, Pennsylvania, after waiting five or six weeks for Oscar’s life insurance payment and married a man named Evan Williams.

So, now there is a whole new scenario to consider. Was Oscar’s brother George really to blame? Had he provoked Oscar by proclaiming his affection for Oscar’s wife, or by scheming to get Oscar drunk and inciting him to kill himself? Did George seize on an opportunity to kill his own brother so that he could make a move on Grace? (If that was the case, it didn’t work, as Grace rebuffed George’s advances after the death of Oscar and left the area, finally settling in Pennsylvania and remarrying.) Bruce’s dad, Philip Clark, often related that one of his uncles shot the other due to fighting over a woman. Perhaps, just as the newspaper reporter had pronounced at the end of the pitchfork incident article, wine and women were the cause.

It seems amazing that the fact that Oscar’s brother George was at Oscar’s home at the time of his death was never passed down in my family stories of the death. Perhaps Edwin and Francena were protecting the reputation of Grace, and willing to have others speculate that Edwin was involved rather than let the story spread about George lusting after Grace.

I thought perhaps there might be court records at the state’s attorney’s office as the newspaper article stated that the state’s attorney, along with the Glover selectmen, was involved in an “examination” of the death. Mimi and Bruce Clark had already found that the selectmen in Glover at the time were W.O. King, C.M. Borland, and G.W. Anderson. At the Newport office of the state’s attorney, I was told that all the records are now in the state records in Middlesex, and, once there, I was told that those records are sealed for 100 years, which would mean that until 2010 no one can look at them. Since then, I have spoken with Steve Sweeney, Records Officer of the state court records, and have learned that if I can find some record of Oscar Shute’s name on file in court records, and have a docket number, I will be allowed
to see the records, as they are public documents, and that it is only to protect Social Security numbers that court records are restricted. So I have some more digging to do to see if perhaps there are notes from the investigation on file.

“The facts will never be known…”

If nothing else, trying to uncover the truth about Oscar’s death has shown me just how different people’s recollections are about what they have heard. Perhaps the real story has bits of everyone’s versions in it. As Mimi and Bruce wrote in their genealogy, “The facts will never

Resources:


Clark, Bruce and Amelia Shute Family Genealogy, unpublished.

Orleans County Monitor (Barton, Vermont newspaper published weekly 1853–1953.) Microfilm at Jones Public Library, Orleans, Vermont.

Telephone/personal/e-mail interviews with: Alexander Strong, Roderick Alexander Wells, Rebecca Alexander Munson, Bruce and Mimi Clark, Steve Sweeney. All interviews done in November/December 2005 and January 2006 by Joan Alexander.

Video interview with Edith Alexander Wells, January 29, 1991, by Wayne H. Alexander. Location of taping was Danville, Vermont. Edith Alexander Wells was 84 years old at the time. Part of Glover Historical Society Oral History Project.


Glover Historical Society  

Treasurer’s Report  

January 1, 2006 – December 31, 2006  

Opening Balances 1/01/2006

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