

GL



VER HISTORY

*Providing for the Future, Remembering the Past
1783-2012*

Vol. 20, No.1

Glover Historical Society, Inc.

Summer 2012

From the president

Hope you are all having a wonderful summer. Your historical society has been very busy. The work and research continues on the Slab City project. Vermont History Expo was a great success. Pioneer Day Camp had one of its best programs ever, with some new instructors and exciting offerings, albeit four days of rain and some challenges keeping everyone dry and happy. The fort building this year was particularly awesome. Some of the boys finished the log cabin, which we started years ago, and there were some spectacular additions to past forts. You can see more pictures on our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Glover-Pioneer-Day-Camp>, and read more about it in this newsletter. The Old Stone House put on an absolutely wonderful barn raising in June. Randy Williams was the official videographer for the event and is in the process of editing the entire preparation process and raising.



President Betsy Day and past president Bob Clark share a few moments at Town Meeting.

Vermont History EXPO was great and our display was very well received. Next on the agenda: Glover Day on Saturday, July 28, and then Old Stone House Day on Sunday, August 12.

The August meeting, Wednesday the 15th, will be the annual meeting. Glover Historical Society will host the Orleans County Historical Society Board of Directors that morning at the museum in Glover. In chatting with Derby Historical Society's Alan Yale at the last Old Stone House Day and EXPO, we thought that it would be interesting to pass the board around to individual society museums to show them our offerings. Glover will be the first to host them. We have completed some projects and started others, and others are still in process. We have garnered a reputation in the state for being a "publishing" society. We have received lots of flattering feedback on our good work. Read on...and enjoy. All the best!

-Betsy Day

Vermont History EXPO

Randy Williams, Betsy Day, Joan Alexander, and Cedric Alexander spent an exciting weekend in Tunbridge June 16 and 17. The weather was exquisite and the crowd steady and interesting. We saw lots of old friends and learned a lot about Vermont in the Civil War. Our booth focused on West Glover native Amanda Colburn Farnham Felch, a Civil War nurse. Much of the research was done by Jodi Baker's fourth graders at the

Glover Community School, with the guidance of Joan Alexander and the inspiration of Natalie Kinsey-Warnock and Bev Davis. Everyone loved our display and the simplicity of the commentary.

Occasionally someone would stop and say, "I'm a Farnham. I know all about those Farnham brothers who mustered in from St. Johnsbury in 1861. Could they be related to Amanda's husband?" Two ladies stopped by

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on Sunday, commenting that they had Felch ancestors and would email us their genealogy. It could not have been more rewarding for us Gloverites, talking up the old history and making new friends.



Randy tends the GHS booth at VT History EXPO.



Cedric Alexander chats with Louise and Fred Kinsey on Saturday.

Clark family genealogy quilt given to GHS Museum

One of the most fun aspects about being in the Glover booth at the Vermont History EXPO at Tunbridge is interacting with the people who come by with Glover stories and memories. This June, Ethelyn Martin of Calais stopped by and told us she had a quilt she wanted us to have. "It belongs in Glover," she said. A week later, it was in Glover, as she drove up with her daughter to give it to us as a gift. Though Ethelyn had told us at EXPO that it was a beauty, it was amazing to see it. It is a "scrappy" quilt, meaning all the squares are made up of a myriad of different materials. But there is nothing else scrappy about the quilt! There are 70 squares in all, each in the same star pattern, with the center square of 69 of those 70 patterned squares hand inscribed with a flowing pen with the name of a different Clark family member. Parents' names, birth dates, and towns and death dates are also written in. It appears that the quilt was made sometime around 1850. Look for it at Town Meeting next year.

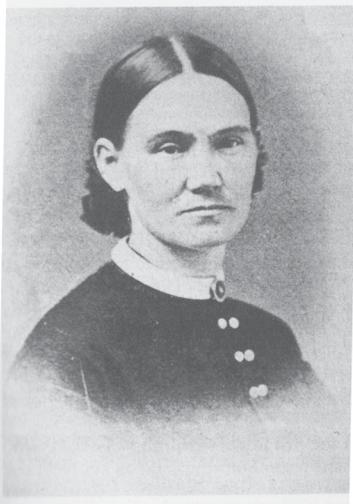
Ethelyn believes it was made by Marcelus Eliza Smith Clark. The quilt was passed down to Ethelyn's stepmother, Marjorie Elizabeth Hinkley, who was a granddaughter of Nettie Clark Hinkley.



Ethelyn Martin with her daughter.

GHS's 2012 VT History Expo exhibit: *Amanda Colburn Farnham Felch, Glover's Civil War nurse*

Author Natalie Kinsey-Warnock heard a piece on VPR last spring about Civil War nurses from Vermont; one nurse mentioned was Amanda Colburn



Amanda Collburn Farnham Felch from Gettysburg book

as a class project this past year, and a serendipitous connection to a Colorado couple who has been researching Amanda for 20 years, Amanda's story is no longer lost. Amanda Colburn Farnham Felch followed her only brother, Henry, to war to lessen their parent's anxiety over his leaving, volunteering as a Hospital Matron with the 3rd Vermont Regiment. She went on to win the respect of soldiers and officers alike for her commitment and bravery as a field and hospital nurse.

She often marched with the soldiers and was at many battles including Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and many others, and, toward the end of the war, was stationed at the new military hospitals established in Virginia. At their first meeting Dorothea Dix was shocked to find Amanda wearing bloomers,

Farnham Felch, a West Glover native. Natalie contacted Glover Historical Society to see what we knew about her. The answer: "Nothing." In all our information about Glover's Civil War stories, there was no mention of her.

Thanks to the Glover fourth-graders, who researched her life

and said so, but then chose to ignore it as Amanda's skills and reputation were so valued.

Amanda's life after the war continued to be filled with hard work and adventure, as she and her husband traveled by wagon train and settled in Colorado. They built a hotel, mined, farmed, raised a family, and were even involved in the Dinosaur Wars! As Natalie likes to say, "Amanda should be more famous than Clara Barton!"

The Glover fourth-grade students and Glover Historical Society

joined forces to create an exhibit that told the story of Amanda C o l b u r n

Farnham Felch. Her story has been found! We will be sharing it again at Glover Day and at the Old Stone House Museum. On October 9, the C o l o r a d o

couple, Dan and JoAnn Gre-nard, will be in Vermont to share more of the story with Glover's students in the af-

ternoon and with the Northeast Kingdom Civil War Roundtable in Newport the next evening. Watch for details in the newspaper as the time draws near.

-Joan Alexander



Joan Alexander poses with Natalie Kinsey-Warnock, who was instrumental in inspiring the Glover fourth-grade junior historians to research Amanda Colburn Farnham Felch.

Donations sought for new fence at Westlook Cemetery

By Vermont statute, all cemeteries are to be fenced in. This law harkens back to the days when barriers were needed to keep cattle out of graveyards. That need for a fence may not apply so much today but nonetheless, many still believe a fence around a cemetery denotes respect and dignity. When Westlook's rotting fence that borders Rte. 16 was removed a few years ago, many felt it should be replaced. But with the new Westlook II cemetery being created and needing major landscaping, there wasn't money in the budget.

Becky Simino asked the Glover Cemetery Commission how they felt about having a fence donated. They lent their blessing to the project. Becky asked Nick Ecker-Racz if he would be willing to donate the cedar,

then members of her family, Jason Simino and Ethan Ward, donated their time to saw, plane and deliver the

posts and boards. A work crew from the C a l e d o n i a Community Work Camp worked six mornings erecting the fence under Greg Bodette's leadership, and E.M. Brown's discounted the screws and stain for the job. The result is a new fence, completed in June.

Total cost for the work crew, a portable toilet, screws and stain was \$1,327.14. Of

that total, \$907.14 has already been donated to honor family members buried at Westlook. That leaves \$420 still needed to cover the costs. If you would like to donate in honor of family or friends buried at Westlook, please send checks to the Cemetery Fund, c/o Glover Town Clerk, 51 Bean Hill, Glover, VT 05839.



New fence at Westlook Cemetery.

New quilt storage closet at the museum

This past winter museum volunteers researched the best way to store quilts, and then made a new space at the museum to make it work. Jack Sumberg refitted an old clothes closet at the museum; Eleanor Bailey, Judy Borrell, Connie Ashe, and Joan Alexander rolled each quilt in tissue around aluminum foil covered carpet tubes and then covered each with a jacket of cotton. Each quilt is now tagged and resting comfortably without any damaging folds. Thanks to Betsy Day and Randy Williams and Jack for finding the tubes, and to Ellen Urie for donating her mother's old 100% cotton sheets, which are hard to come by these days!



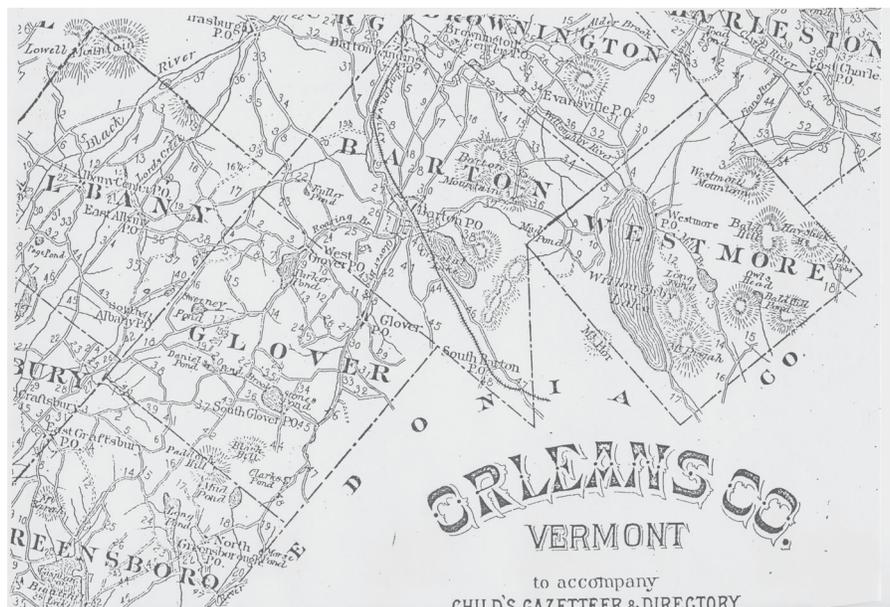
Why is Glover so SQUARE?

The Town of Glover was granted in 1783 by the “Governor, Council and General Assembly of the Free-men of the State of Vermont” as a square of territory six miles on each side, containing 23,040 acres, and divided into 144 lots, each one-half mile square. Why so square?

A glance at a map of Vermont town lines reveals that Glover is set in a block of towns three wide and seven long extending from Worcester to Coventry on the west and Marshfield to Westmore on the east, with the north-south lines running about 25 degrees east of north. Thirteen of these 21 towns are six miles square or

convenient traveling distance to the meetinghouse a new town would be formed. By contrast, “the range township began to take form about 1720 and was from the start one of dispersed single farmsteads.” This is the plan by which Glover was laid out.

As a practicality, the range township divided into square lots was easier to survey, map, and divide into saleable parcels. Thomas Jefferson strongly recommended a system of five- or six-mile square townships set off in lots as a rational improvement over the old style odd shapes and “metes and bounds” surveys that led to endless boundary disputes between towns and



Map from *Child's Gazetteer*, 1883

close to it. Marshfield, Irasburg and Barton are larger, but Coventry, Brownington, Sheffield, Wheelock and Stannard are smaller. About 70 of Vermont's 252 towns are six miles square or close to it. Bennington is one of these and is the first Vermont town granted by Governor Benning Wentworth of New Hampshire, in 1750.

According to Christopher J. Lenney's *Sightseeing: Clues to the Landscape History of New England*, “between 1620 and 1760 New England settlement underwent a steady evolution from the nuclear to the range township. In the nuclear township, a center village marked by a meetinghouse and clustered core of homelots was surrounded by scattered outfields and extensive common-lands.” As settlement extended out more than a

between individual landowners.

Since many of the original grantees in towns like Glover had no intention of settling on their granted lands, ease of determining boundaries on lands offered for sale was an important aspect of the speculation in land that played such a big part in the settlement of Vermont.

Dividing a hill town like Glover into squares without regard to topography or soil types may seem like a questionable method in retrospect, but it did get settlers here. Looking at the original lot lines superimposed on a topographic map of Glover one can see only a few possible correlations between the old lines and today's maintained roads or field boundaries. In the end, topography and soil types have prevailed.

-Jack Sumberg

The adventures of the Abbott brothers

by Joan Alexander

with thanks to Su O'Brien of Grantham, NH, for all her research on the Abbott brothers

Part II - Gold fever!

First to the mills...

In our last newsletter, we introduced Varnum and Jonas Abbott, brothers who left Glover in 1852 to seek their fortunes in the mills at Lowell, Massachusetts. But it was not long before they saw their future in the gold fields instead of the mills. In their letters home from Lowell to Glover, writing to their mother, stepfather and younger sister, there was talk of heading to California; once Varnum even wrote that he was considering the gold fields of Australia.

...and then to the Gold Rush

The Gold Rush in California had greatly quieted down by 1852, but Varnum and Jonas were young, optimistic and looking for new adventure. Off they went, first Varnum, who, we believe, was 21, and later, Jonas, who was just a year younger. They were not the first in Glover to catch gold fever—in his letters Varnum mentions that he wants to know where “Clark & Robertson, Frederick Cheney and Haliburt” are so he can find them. From a letter that Jonas, who was still working in Lowell, wrote home to Glover, we know that Varnum had left for California by January 18, 1854. Jonas reports that Varnum sailed to the Isthmus, traveling with another mill worker who he had roomed with for a year, and that on the ship they met seven men



Varnum (left) and Jonas Abbott

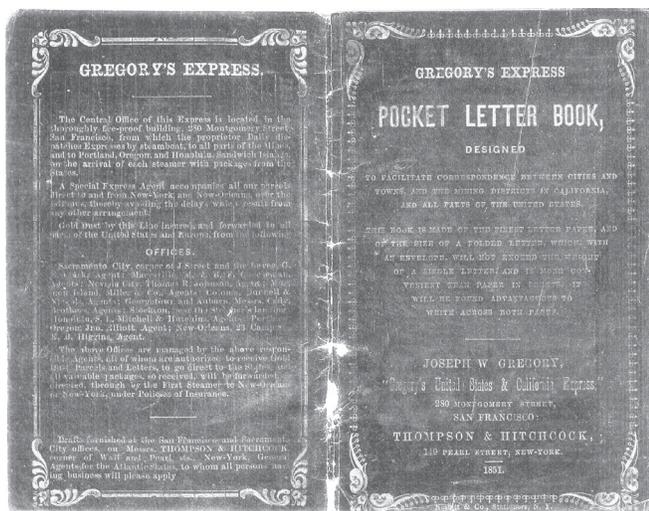
from Lyndon, Vermont; “duston and ayers want [sic] with him,” Jonas wrote. (It is hard to know whether Jonas was saying they “went” with him or they “weren’t” with him!) At the Glover Historical Society Museum, we have family records that show at least two other Gloverites were in the California gold fields: Frederick White Kimball, from 1850–1854, and Rufus Drew, who was there for seven years. Many Vermonters had gone before them. Lynn Bonfield of Peacham, a scholar of Vermonters in the Gold Rush, has written that by 1850, more than 11,000 Vermonters had dreams of gold and had left for California. Just getting to California was expensive; Bonfield’s research showed that one person’s expenses in 1853 from Vermont to California totaled \$408.64, equivalent to over \$11,000 in 2007 money, which, she writes, was “well above the average yearly income of Americans in 1850.” Varnum and Jonas’ letters from the mills often mentioned their entrepreneur sales at the mills; Varnum may have saved all the money himself needed for the trip to California, or perhaps his mother and stepfather helped him financially. We know Varnum bought land in Glover in October 1853, which indicates he was a saver.

Four letters that Varnum wrote back East while in

from Lyndon, Vermont; “duston and ayers want [sic] with him,” Jonas wrote. (It is hard to know whether Jonas was saying they “went” with him or they “weren’t” with him!) At the Glover Historical Society Museum, we have family records that show at least two other Gloverites were in the California gold fields: Frederick White Kimball, from 1850–1854, and Rufus Drew, who was there for seven years. Many Vermonters had gone before them. Lynn Bonfield of Peacham, a scholar of Vermonters in the Gold Rush, has written that by 1850, more than 11,000 Vermonters had dreams of gold and had left for California. Just getting to California was

California still exist. These letters, spanning from February 12, 1854 through March 30, 1856, now live at the Brancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley. We have recently learned of these letters and have requested copies.

Living at our own Glover Historical Society museum is another artifact from Varnum's gold mining days. In the 1990s, Marquis "Mark" Norton Cobb and his daughter Hazel Johnson of Rutland, Vermont, made gifts to the museum of many items from the Norton family who lived on Cook Hill (now Perron Hill) in the 1800s. In that collection was a tiny little blue notebook, 3"x5", with gilt lettering, *Gregory's Express Pocket Letter Book*.



About "Gregory's Express Pocket Letter Book"

The front cover of the letter book is filled with type from top to bottom with explanations and advertising about what a great little book it is: "Designed to facilitate correspondence between cities and town and the mining districts in California and all parts of the United States. This book is made of the finest letter paper and of the size of a folder letter which, with an envelope, will not exceed the requirement of a letter and is more convenient than paper in sheets..." These pocket-sized books, with 20 pages of lined paper, were published by Thompson & Hitchcock in 1851, intended for miners to write a long letter home, then slip into the provided envelope and mail back East to family anxious to hear from their loved ones. The back cover lists the offices of Gregory's Express and the messenger and mail services they provided. One account on the internet said that the letter books were often handed out free to miners as

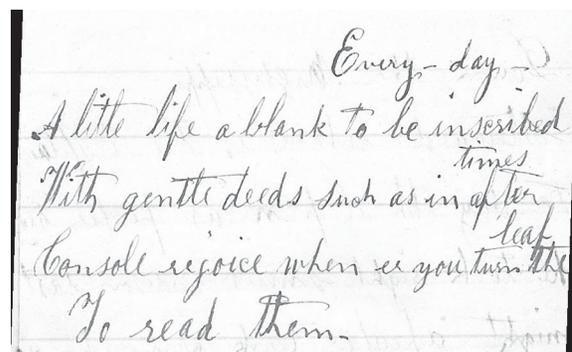
they came off the ships and were considered excellent advertising for the other shipping services that Gregory's provided miners, including shipping gold dust.

If you search the internet for "Gregory's Express Pocket Letter Books," you will find several for sale; even blank ones sell for at least \$1,000. "They are quite rare, and rarer still when they are found complete with a letter," writes an online company that deals in Gold Rush collectibles. In that case, we are especially lucky, for in the pocket letter book Varnum wrote in, every page is filled with his writing. All the pages are intact, but the envelope is missing, so perhaps Varnum used the book just as was instructed: he filled it up with writing, and then mailed it home. It is in remarkably good condition for something he wrote in for over two years.

Sometimes Varnum dated his writings in his pocket letter book, and occasionally added the name of the town he was in. From these notes, we know he was in Sandy Bar as early as April 1855. The only entry he dated from Horsetown was in March 1856. His first two letters were sent from Columbia, California, but by July 1855 he was writing from Sandy Bar, and by March 1856 from Horsetown. (Horsetown is in Shasta County, which was the home of 105 of the 3,000 mines that were in California. It is north of Sacramento, near Redding. Sandy Bar is no longer in existence, but was in Calaveras County, which had over 200 mines; Brett Hart used the place name Sandy Bar in his mining stories.)

"... a blank to be inscribed..."

Varnum inscribed the front end paper of his pocket letter book: "Varnum Abbott Cal 1854" and christened it with this message:



These lines (with the word "thoughts" replacing "deeds") are from the poem "A Character" by the English

poet Samuel Rogers, published in 1840. Perhaps Varnum had memorized this verse, like others he included later in his letter book, during his school days in Glover.

A potpourri of jokes, songs, weather, a eulogy, weather, statistics, etc...

Varnum's first additions to his letter book are quite cheerful; he records several jokes and stories, each with a punch line that involves overdrinking or bathroom humor. "Editorial Chitchat" is how he titles one, which makes you think he has access to magazines or newspapers. He writes out the lyrics to a romantic song that had been included in a "Mohawk legend" published in 1851: "... When I sleep I am rocked on the waters blue/ In my birch canoe..." This might be a piece Varnum remembered reading as part of the cultural enrichment while at the Lowell Mills, or from something he was reading in California.



Courtesy of the California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

He recorded old sayings ("... the darkest time is just before day"), many maxims ("Always speak the truth"), and quotes from everyone from Shakespeare ("A hearty laugh bespeaks a vacant mind.") to the Bible ("The way of the transgressor is hard"). Varnum almost never notes who the author is of the quotes and poems he writes in his letter book, unless it is he himself. He might have been writing down pieces he once had to learn by heart to recite, as often there are one or two words that differ from the original; the words Varnum substitutes in always are synonyms that retain the meaning of the phrase as it originally was written. When Varnum includes his own poetic creations, he marks them as such, writing "original" at the end of each piece. The one

exception when Varnum does write the author is when he writes all five verses and the chorus to "Forlorn, My Love, No Comfort Near" and adds "Burns poem copied [sic] on rainy day in Mar 9th, 56." Maybe he did not credit the other quotations because he did not recall who the author was.

There are also statistics, which he must have gleaned from newspapers and magazines. For example, he records the population and square miles in California, the number of churches, the number of hangings, and the wheat crop, and the number of miners in California (140,000). There is one law recorded: "May 16th AD 1855 Public Gambling Stopped [sic]."

Lonesome

By the time he writes in April 1855, the mood of his letter book has changed abruptly. On April 11, he writes: "Tremendous snow storm—" It is the first entry he uses the letter book to comment on what he is experiencing, using the letter book as a diary rather than a depository for good stories or maxims to retell. And just four days later, he writes, "A long lonesome stormy Sunday." After more than a year of hard work and no gold riches, the miner's life must have been taking its toll, even on a young, ambitious man. We know that just months earlier, on December 6, 1854, his brother Jonas, who we believe had followed him to California, had died. That in itself, to say nothing of toiling away for naught, must have been very sobering. Varnum wrote a long poem, "My Brother," honoring Jonas' memory on the last four pages of his letter book. "Oh, he is gone, and stricken friends are weeping," it begins. In his poem Varnum also mentions his father, who had died in 1845, and his mourning mother and sister. Varnum may have written it at the time of Jonas' death, and later copied it into the last pages of his letter book, or perhaps wrote it many months after and purposely used the last pages of the book to reflect on this most significant event.

The death of his brother, homesickness, and his poor luck finding gold color the tone of the rest of Varnum's letter book. He continues writing his own verse, which he often did in his letters home from Lowell. His original poetic pieces are mostly thoughts of missing home: "This tenement of clay is still here/But my mind is far away east/There childish years quickly passed away/ And friends have gone to a better work than this/Hard is the struggle to gain riches /& I am amongst many who /

never could get them it seems as if/ It was decreed in the beginning.” His feelings of sadness and regret at being so far from home and not finding gold are buoyed by thoughts of returning home; “Loud beats my heart & quick my pulse/When I think of loved ones far away/ Soon I’ll glide over the waters blue /To meet you thinking you’ll greet me.”

This old adage, which Varnum wrote one day, says it all: “Mother and Home are the two sweetest words in the English Language.”

Conflicted

By April 21, 1855, Varnum seems ready to end the adventure. He writes an “original” about settling down, and it seems he has someone particular in mind: “My youthful days are nearly spent in /rambling and seeking for riches /and now, I only ask a homestead /a quiet resting place for Me & you /Where health, peace and comfort dwells.” It seems he is pinning his hopes on a woman named Ellen as a couple of pages later he writes “Beneath the Shoogar [sic] pine I gazed and thought of Ellen... then to reflect and think of friends and pleasure far away /Said I will no more for riches seek but to my lover return.”

The next week, on April 29th, 1855, he wrote another “original.” It reads like a mantra of self-talk, trying to convince himself he can stick it out, in the “desolate clime... deprived of all pleasure... and earthly enjoyment” for “gold shall be my reward... for gold is all I crave...”

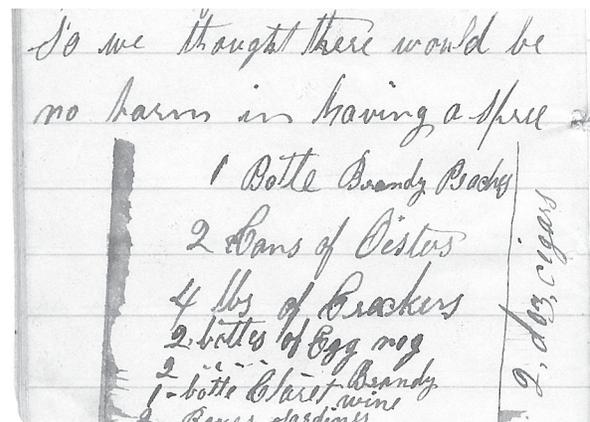
In August of that year, he seemed determined to stay until he achieved a hefty goal: “When I can raise ten thousand clear, in dust to pure and clear/I’ll bid farewell to all the mines and leave my cabin fire.”

“A regular California time”

By March 1856, he is in Horsetown, where on March 2, “seven of us in number... had a regular California time in the Bridge house... as we was going to separate for a short time... we thought there would be no harm in having a spree...” Varnum records the inventory of what they had to celebrate, from brandy to sardines. Varnum has, at least on this occasion, moved beyond an earlier observation: “What makes Californians so reckless & treacherous/ Wy [sic] because they drink so much bad spirit while in the state.”

Four weeks after the “spree,” still in Horsetown, Varnum writes a letter home again. Once we see that

letter, the last one in the collection at Berkeley, we may know more about when exactly he left for home.

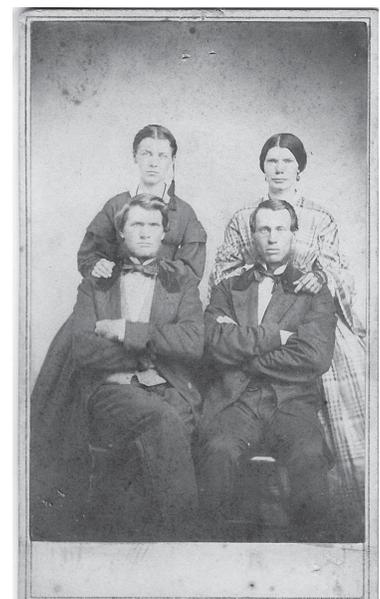


Back to Glover

We do know Varnum returned home to Glover sometime in 1856. He had been in California for at least 27 months. It is very doubtful that he came back with the “ten thousand clear” he had once set his sights on, for he continued to work on the farm and in the mills the rest of his life.

The 1860 census found Varnum, 26, on a Glover farm with his sister Dolly, age 21. His mother and stepfather had both died by this time. From noticing the census taker’s route, it does not appear to be one of the farms up on Clark Hill where he had been living before leaving Glover for the Lowell mills.

Varnum married Ellen Dwinell in Glover on October 7, 1860. Ellen, born November 4, 1830, in Glover, was the daughter of Albert and Lydia Dwinell, a farming family. According to their marriage certificate, Ellen and Varnum were both 29, and it was the first marriage for both. On the marriage certificate, Varnum’s



Varnum Abbott with wife Ellen Dwinell behind him on the left. Varnum’s sister Dolly Abbott Norton sits behind her husband Elijah A. Norton on the right.

occupation was listed as farmer. Ellen had probably known the Abbott family all her life. Was she the same Ellen whom Varnum wrote about in his letterbook? The 1860 Glover census showed only one other young adult besides Ellen in the Dwinell family, and that was Adalaide, known as Addie, who is the same age as Ellen, so it seems safe to say they were twins. There is also a nine-month-old baby living with the family, Watson D. Harker, born in Vermont; perhaps Adelaide's son, who by the time of his death at age two had been adopted by Albert and Lydia Dwinell.

Varnum and Ellen's only child, Albert Dwinell Abbott, was born on June 30, 1862 in Glover, and less than a year later, on May 23, 1863, Ellen died of consumption. She was 25 years and 8 months old, according to her gravestone (though her death certificate states 24), and was buried at Westlook Cemetery, with a marble tablet gravestone. The same month as her death, Varnum registered for the Civil War draft, but he did not serve.

Back to the Mills

Varnum left Albert in the care of the Dwinell grandparents, and returned to work in Lowell.

From 1864–1865, the *Lowell City Directory* listed him as a watchman for the Merrimack Mills, living in Merrimack Mill boardinghouse #136. In 1866, the *Lowell City Directory* listed him as a spinner for the Merrimack Mills, living in Merrimack Mill boardinghouse #79.

The obituary of his son, Albert, who died in 1922, stated that Varnum had been an overseer in a cotton factory in Lowell after the death of Ellen.

“Gone to rest...”

Varnum died on 26 May 1867; age 35 years 9 months. We do not know the cause of his death.

He was buried next to his wife, Ellen. His tablet reads,

“Varnum Abbott died 1867 AE. 35 yr, 9 mo. “Farewell dear father, thou are gone to rest.”

Varnum's inlaws, Albert and Lydia, had not only their adopted son Watson's death as a baby to deal with, Ellen's early death at age 25, Varnum's death four years

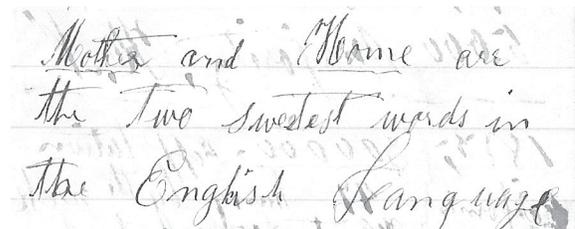
later, but then also Addie's death at age 41. It must have been a great comfort to have their grandson Albert to raise. Thankfully, Albert outlived both grandparents, even with Lydia living to be 94. Albert himself died “a painful death of gangrene” in 1922, as was written on the back of Albert's studio portrait in the Norton collection at the GHS Museum. Albert left behind his wife, Dora Wiley, whom he had married in 1887,

and their three sons, Varnum Jewett Abbott, Wallace Dwinell Abbott and Alvah W. Abbott. Albert and Dora are buried at Westlook Cemetery next to Varnum and Ellen, Addie, Watson, and Albert and Lydia.

No doubt there are descendants of Albert and Dora's sons living today. We hope Varnum Abbott's sense of adventure, and knack for prose, live on!



Varnum (right) and Ellen Dwinell Abbott's gravestones.



Anyone who would like a copy of all the pages of Varnum Abbott's letter book, please email Joan at joanalex_05839@yahoo.com. If you do not have email, you can write to GHS at PO Box 208, Glover, VT 05839 and we can make copies and mail them to you. Just include \$5 to cover copying and postage.

Stop the presses! Varnum Abbott's letters home from California have arrived!

“my best Respects to all inquiring Friends...”

Over 150 years later, I feel like I am one of Varnum's inquiring friends. This newsletter was proofread, the layout finished and all set for the printers when a manila envelope arrived with photocopies of four letters Varnum Abbott wrote home from the goldfields of California in 1854–1956. The archivist at the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley had warned that the letters might not copy well—they were written on blue paper and the ink was very faded. But they had done a great job copying them, and they were very legible. They were truly a gift from the past. We decided to hold the presses to be able to share them with you, with Varnum's original spelling and capitalization intact, I did add in some punctuation. Who knows what else we might discover down the road to help tell the story of Varnum and Jonas Abbott; there are still plenty of questions to be answered and, we are sure, tales to be told.

- Joan Alexander

Varnum's first letter was written on **January 4, 1854**, from Columbia, CA, to his brother Jonas, who was still working in the Lowell mills. The whole experience of being in California was all still quite new. “I set myself down to write a few lines to you...I should like to Be in Lowell to Day & enjoy your society once more. I do not enjoy the Society here. But this is quite A place here several gambling houses & Fandango houses & quite a number of stores of all kinds. I got here the 18th of Jan...had About \$15 left when I got here. Whittier & I keep house alone & we work together. we work at mining, 3 of us in Company. I & Wittier and Dodge, we hain't made much yet But I am in hopes that we shall. My share was \$15 last weak...It is Called hard times here this winter & I think it not much better than Lowell to make money in some make money while others hardly make grub. I have ben Prospecting most of the time since I have Ben here trying to find a good claim to work... I haven't seen any of Glover folks yet...I would like to hear from you more than pen can tell.”

Three months later when Varnum writes home to Glover to his mother, stepfather and sister Dolly, he is still in Columbia. He is settling in, working hard for others and sometimes going off prospecting on his own. He

remains optimistic that he will find riches, but is very realistic that many do not. From his **May 7, 1854** letter: “...I received A letter from Jonas to day ...he wrote that Clarissa Clark was dead that was the worst thing that has come acrost my mind since I left Lowell or the most that I have had to mar my hapiness...” (Clarissa was his stepfather's granddaughter, age 9, who had died on March 28.) “I have not made much here yet but that don't worry me any. I have made a living & A little more. that is Better than what a good many has done...some has been here 4 years & haint worth 50 dollars. as soon as they get any money they go to gambling & loose it all...I believe that the married men are the worst to spend money in this Country however I am not fit to judge because I am single, the single are bad enough sometimes but California is a place that I can hardley give any description of Country nor the people for there is all sort of folks here & to day it may look beautiful & to morrow sad & dreary. there is one thing that I have become convinced of that is we may go where we may, we are not out of the reach of Grief and Sadness. Nor if we had all the gold in California it would not raise us above it. But as the Bible says seek & ye shall find, ask & it shall be opened to you. I mean to seek California from Waukeen [San Joaquin] River to Oregon but what



"Gold Mining in California" by Currier and Ives, 1871. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

I will find something Either gold or Poverty..." He has seen examples of both. He tells of one man who found a rich claim and made over \$2000, and another man who dug out a lump worth \$4800, but "they say that he has spent the bigger part of it. So it goes... I have worked mighty hard some weeks & got nothing."

"I must tell you what we had for super to night it was boiled potatoes & steaks (Beef) warm biscuit & Buter & tea. I have got so that I can make first rate biscuit, flap jacks & donuts..." Varnum is now rooming with two other miners. Some thoughts he tacks on to the end of the letter; "it aint all gold that glitters" and "Mother I wish that you would mend my socks." (Apparently his sewing skills are lagging behind his cooking talents!) He writes to his stepfather: "Father, I was hapy to hear that you was a little beter & hope that you will be smart enough to give me the rest of my punishment when I come home. you said that folks thought strange of my Coming out here wal it warn't any thing strange to me for I have been think of it this 3 years..." And also, a note to his sister: "Dolly, write about Albert Dwinell, whether they are well or not & if the girls go to

school." [Albert Dwinell is Varnum's future father-in-law, and "the girls" refers to his future wife, Ellen and her twin sister, Adelaide. It is a little over a year later when Varnum writes a poem about Ellen in his pocket-book.

The following day, he adds this postscript: "I have been Prospecting to day. I found a place & we washed about 2 hours & got 10 dollars. 5 of us. We are going to wash to morrow get our toom [?] & sluses over there & see what we can make..."

The third letter is written form Sandy Bar on **July 8, 1855**. He describes the place: "There is 25 men on this Bar 3 women 2 Children. I board out this summer. Board is 8 dollars a weak. I have been at work this last spring for a flooming company. We have got the floom laid & the dam most finished, the floom is 650 ft long 12 ft wide & got 6 ft fall. The water runs a mile in 6 minutes through the floom the water is 3 ft deep in the floom we have got 4 wheels to cary the pumps to draw the car out of the pit. one of the men remarked that we had got more masheanery hear than they had in all of

Lowell Factory...” Varnum’s experience working with machinery on the farm in Glover and in the Lowell mills no doubt served him well in California.

Just as Verum’s resolve about staying in California until he had struck it rich was wavering about this time in his pocket letter book writing, so it is also noted in this letter. “I am well and ever thinking of home,” he begins, “& the many privileges that I once enjoyed, yet gold attracts my mind & entices me to stay longer thinking that by & by I shall be repaid for all. For the last six years I have labored hard & saved every dollar almost in order that I might get anuf to Settle my Self down on a farm in comfortable circumstances, but my misfortune I have come far short of it. I shall try six years longer ... & if I don’t get it then I will live an old Batchelor, take

The fourth and last letter in the Bancroft Library collection was written on **March 30, 1856**, the year we had thought Varnum returned to Vermont. It was on March 2 that he and friends had their “regular California time” to celebrate before they were going to separate for “a short time.” Varnum writes that he has not heard from home since Thanksgiving, “yet I look for a letter every mail.” He admits it has been “some time” since he himself has written, though, “I expect that you have heard from the other boys.” By the other boys, I believe he refers to his stepfather’s youngest son, Ezra, who was just one year older than Varnum, and other Glover Argonauts. Along with Ezra, Varnum mentions Rufus (probably Rufus Drew), George and Seth. These were probably the boys he had celebrated with at the beginning



Gold prospectors in California. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

live easy & bear grief with a smile & be ever contented. let my lot be what it may....I cannot tell when I shall come Home. I think some of coming this fall unless I think that I can make wages this winter...”

He describes the festivities that took place on the Fourth of July, as he had once in his letter home from Lowell, though, he admits, “I worked the same as usual. Some of the boys went to Todd’s Valley. they had a Ball there in the evening about 30 gents and 15 ladies - tickets sold for \$10.00. the young chaps generally spend from 25 to 30 to a Ball. Those that make money easy spent it easy. So it goes...”

of the month, for he writes, “The boys left here about 4 weeks ago to go down on Feather river. Ezra thought that they could do better down there...I received a letter from them last night they are well & have bought a claim. I should have went with them if I had not had a claim. I think that I shall do down there in may although I cannot tell certain.” We do not know if he did join them on the Feather River.

“A good many are complaining of hard times. I think there will be a rush for the states this spring. I believe that 9 out of 10 that go to the states come back again. I do not intend to go until I can get aneough to cary me

there & bring me back again yet I would be vary happy to see you all.”

Varnum included more thoughts of marriage vs. bachelorhood. “I canot tell you of any marriages as you can me. It seems as if every body was getting married. let them go it while they are young for it don’t make any difference with me for I have made up my mind to live a Bachelor’s life any how.”

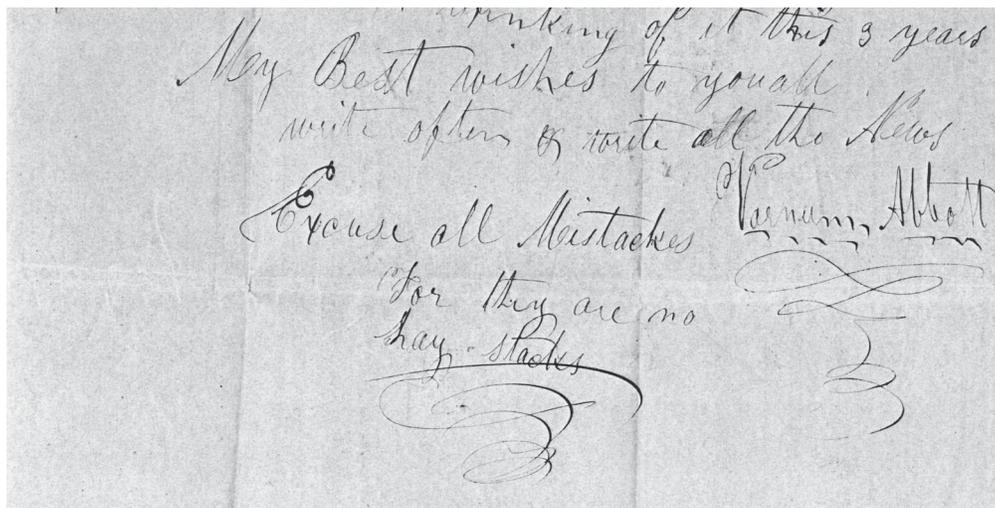
He includes a special message to Dolly. “Dolly you wrote something about going to school this spring. I hope that you are a going if not you must help mother all that you can for me. Give my best wishes to all of my Uncles, Aunts and Cousins. May this find you all well and comfortable. Yours with respect, V. Abbott.”

There are mysteries and questions still...

Because Varnum wrote “Dec 6, 1854 California” in his pocket letter book at the end of his original poem about Jonas’ death, we believe Dec 6 was either the

date Varnum wrote the poem, or perhaps the date of Jonas’ death. Unfortunately, the letters did not shed any light on where or why Jonas died, or how and when Varnum learned of his death. We do not know where Jonas is buried.

It is also possible that Varnum did not leave California in 1856 as we had originally thought; this letter does not confirm that assumption that he left then. He may have stayed longer to work his claim. Or maybe he sold his claim and joined the “rush for the states” that he mentioned in the last letter. All we really know for sure is that by the 1860 census, Varnum is back in Glover, farming, the pursuit he said was the whole purpose of his trip to California. He wanted to “Settle my Self down on a farm in comfortable circumstances.” His adventures in the mills and goldfields had taught him much about life from happiness to sorrow, all of which he would continue to experience during the next seven years before his death in 1867, at age 36.



Closing of Varnum Abbott's May 7th, 1854 letter to "Respected Parents and Sister."

In Memoriam

Nash Basom
Rebecca Alexander Munson
Marilyn Leland Morgan

Ronald Perron
Carol Clark Wheatley

Winners of the first round of “What is it?” contest at Glover Community School

This spring, GHS set up a little corner in the Glover Community School’s trophy case to showcase items from the museum. On the first of each month a new historical object goes in, and students have all month to think about what it might be and cast their vote in a special box in the office.

The younger students have been the best participants. No item has stumped all the students, and even wrong answers have shown lots of thinking and creativity. Each

month’s winner is chosen randomly for correct answers, and for their prize, the winner chooses a book from the array of GHS publications, and a souvenir from the Runaway Pond Bicentennial.

Thanks to principal Dale Burnash for supporting this contest and to all the GCS teachers who have encouraged their students to figure out “What is it?” We look forward to continuing next year.



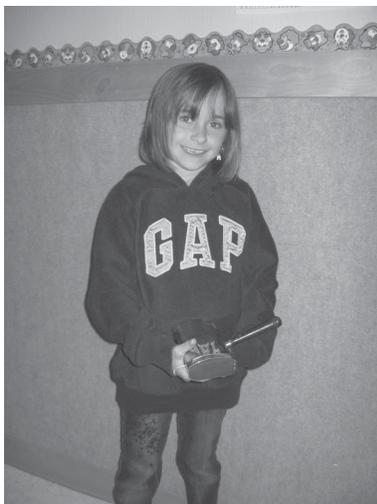
Zachery Aulise, Grade 3
rattle top



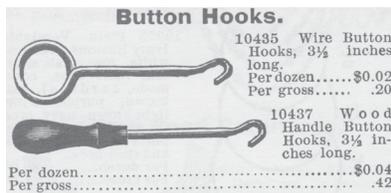
Cassie Geraw, Grade 4
foot warmer



Ryan Taylor, Grade 3
Sap tubing



Maddie Racine, Grade 1,
tabletop sweeper



Zachary Boutin, Grade 1
button hooks

Pioneer Day Camp 2012

The sixteenth annual Pioneer Day Camp, sponsored by the Glover Historical Society took place at the old Parker Settlement above Lake Parker in West Glover on June 25–29. The theme this year was “Slab City,” in honor of the work that Connie Ashe, Joan Alexander, Eleanor Bailey and Judy Borrell have been doing, collecting old photos and stories of the old 1940’s lumber camp and buildings at the outlet end of the lake. The campers spent the first four days at the settlement learning old time skills, building forts in the woods, playing old time games, and focusing on some old crafts. Morning activities revolved around dipping candles the old-fashioned way, using a crosscut saw, making and cooking Johnny cakes over an open fire, dying and felting wool, and tin smithing making lanterns for their candles.

The afternoon focus groups included botanical illustration, basketry, pottery in the new pot shop, Abenaki games, and boating on Lake Parker.

On Wednesday afternoon, Joan and Connie gave a fabulous presentation about Slab City. We split the group into two sections.

Joan explained the logistics of the layout of the Shadow Lake settlement along the shore around the beach. She cut out a blue tarp in the shape of the lake with inlet and outlet and handed out pictures and small wooden buildings representing those present at the time. The kids were captivated. Connie was upstairs with the other kids, talking about the different names of the lake over the years and telling old stories.

Friday, we all went to Shadow Lake, hiked up through Steve Brown’s land across from the beach, looking for old cellar holes and well sites. We climbed to the top of the cliffs overlooking the lake and ate our lunches and then retired to the beach for a swim.

It was a great week, despite the rain and we learned so much about our town. Thanks to the town of Glover for their generous donation and to various supporters for their contributions of scholarships for needy campers. We are so lucky to live in this wonderful town!



Pioneer Day Campers are captivated by Joan Alexander’s description of the logistics of Slab City on Shadow Lake.



Connie Ashe did a beautiful job explaining the story of Slab City and talking about old stories of canoe capsizing and drowning, and all the various names the lake has had over time. The kids got to exercise their creative skills drawing the waterway with inlet and outlet.



On Friday the campers hiked up to the old foundations of the lumber camp at Slab City and climbed to the very top, overlooking Shadow Lake, where they had their picnic lunch.



All of the kids, during their morning activities, got to experience how the early settlers cut trees and firewood using a crosscut saw. Everyone appreciated just how much work it was.



The week culminated, after a very long, buggy hike, with a swim in Shadow Lake, watermelon, and some creative sand work.



Runaway Pond in the news

The waters that escaped from Long Pond on June 6, 1810 may have traveled the 25 miles to Lake Memphremagog and, some at least, on to the St. Lawrence River, the Atlantic Ocean, and beyond, but the story of Runaway Pond had as remarkable a journey. New research by Sam Silverman of Lexington, Massachusetts, has brought to light many more reprints of the story than we had previously known.

The story, under the heading *Wonderful Casualty* first appeared in the Danville *North Star* on June 16, ten days after the event. *Spooners Vermont Journal*, of Windsor, reprinted it on the 25th and the *New England Palladium*, of Boston, on the 29th of June. On August 10, 1810, it was reprinted by *The Bee* of Hudson, New York, with the comment “scarcely any phenomenon in nature, unless it may be an eruption from Aetna or Vesuvius, can be conceived more sublime, than this out-pouring, and flowing of this body of water.” Between June 16th and August 10th the story had been reprinted at least 75 times by newspapers from Maine to Georgia.

The newspapers of the day, often weeklies with small print runs and very local distribution, relied on reprints of stories from other papers for all but their local news. There was no telegraph or news service like Associated Press, though papers might sometimes have a “correspondent” in some faraway place who sent letters home

to be published. In the Danville *North Star* the story of Runaway Pond ran next to a story about Napoleon’s wedding!

Glover’s favorite story had a reprise in 1826 when the Rev. S. Edwards Dwight published an article in the *American Journal of Science* based on his own observations and interviews with local participants. This long article was summarized in other publications from Maine to New Bern, North Carolina, at least 28 times by the end of 1826.

Between 1826 and 1858 the story appeared in various forms at least 26 times from Brattleboro to Milwaukee. There was more coverage after the 50th Anniversary Celebration in 1860 and the story continued to appear, on and off, into the early 20th century. Most of the reprints and retellings tell the basic story more or less correctly. Errors do creep in and get repeated. Sometimes new elements appear, as in an 1895 story in the *St. Albans Weekly Messenger* which states that gold was found in the dry bed of the lake and the channel dug by the torrent. In 1862 a story appeared in a Lowell, Massachusetts, paper and several reprints recounting the reaction of a married couple to the approaching flood. She said: “let us pray,” he said: “let us run.” They ran and their lives were saved.

We thank Mr. Silverman for sharing his research with us.

-Jack Sumberg

Glover History

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Thanks to Lucy Smith for compiling our mailing list and keeping it up to date, and printing our mailing labels.

Publications of Glover Historical Society

Andersonville, French & West Glover Cemeteries. Gravestone Inscriptions & Other Genealogical Data. Researched & compiled by Dick Brown, with major additional research by Jean M. Borland & John E. Parry. 2006. 8½"x11", 85 pp. Spiral bound. \$20.00 plus \$5.00 for postage and handling, or available at the Glover Town Clerk's office without p&h charge.

Andersonville: The First 100 Years. Compiled and edited by Jeannine B. Young. 2004, 2nd ed. 2006. 8½"x11", 220 pp. Spiral bound. Over 200 photos, charts and maps; diaries, genealogies, letters from Scotland, a history of Andersonville School, histories of the lots and some of its people, and Andersonville Cemetery gravestone inscriptions. \$28.00 plus \$5.00 p&h, or available at the Glover Town Clerk's office without p&h charge.

Mother and Daughter: Two Diaries of Glover, Vermont Girls. Complete text from the diaries of Edith Francena Aldrich (1894) and Edith Alexander (1922), compiled and annotated by Joan Alexander. Profusely illustrated. 2004. 8½"x11". 176 pp. \$12.00 plus \$5.00 p&h, or available at the Glover Town Clerk's office without p&h charge.

Run, Chamberlain, Run. The story of Runaway Pond written for children and illustrated by Daniel Cummings, Sr. 2004. 24 pp. \$10.00 plus \$2.00 p&h, or available at the Glover Town Clerk's office without p&h charge.

Town of Glover E-911 Map. Geographically accurate map with road names and house numbers. 2004. 18"x24" size \$10.00 plus \$1.50 shipping and handling. 24" x 36" size \$15.00 plus \$2.50 p&h, or available at the Glover Town Clerk's office without p&h charge.

Westlook Cemetery. Gravestone Inscriptions & Other Genealogical Data. Researched & compiled by Dick Brown, with major additional research by Jean M. Borland. Over 2,100 entries. 2002, 2nd ed. 2004. 8½" x 11", 230 pp. Spiral bound. \$20.00 plus \$5.00 for p&h, or available at the Glover Town Clerk's office without p&h charge.

Note that prices quoted for the following publications include postage & handling charges.

Glover, Vermont Federal Census for the Years 1800-1810-1820-1830-1840 with Index. Transcribed and edited by Wayne H. Alexander. 2000. 8½"x11", 46 pp. Spiral bound. \$20.00 postpaid.

Glover, Vermont 1850 Federal Census with Index. Transcribed and edited by Wayne H. Alexander. 1999. 8½"x11", 44 pp. Spiral bound. \$20.00 postpaid.

Memories of Glover: Reminiscences of a Mid-Nineteenth Century Vermont Village. Letters from the Rev. Benjamin Brunning published by the *Orleans County Monitor* in 1907. 2000. 5½"x8½", 32 pp., illustrated. \$10.00 postpaid.

History of the Town of Glover, 1783-1983. Originally published by the Glover Bicentennial Committee in 1983; reprinted by Glover Historical Society in 1992. 8½"x11", 140 pp., illustrated. \$20.00 postpaid.

Runaway Pond: The Complete Story. Compilation of Resources by Wayne H. Alexander. Third Edition. 2010. 8½"x11", 90 pp., illustrated. Spiral bound. The nearest thing to a complete collection of contemporary newspaper accounts and other material relating to the 1810 event. \$25.00 postpaid, or \$20 if pickup in Glover.

The Union House of Glover, Vermont. By Marguerite Bean Fiske, with additional text and notes by others. 1999. 7"x 8½", 40 pp., illustrated. A history, from the stagecoach days of the mid-19th century to the present, of what is now the Union House Nursing Home. \$6.00 postpaid.

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