

Washington Historical Society Newsletter

WWW.WNHHS.ORG
FALL 2021 EDITION

Washington Historical Society Officers

President:	Susan Fairchild
Vice President:	Bert Bodnar
Treasurer:	Elaine Crandall
Secretary:	Marian Baker
Archivist:	Gwen Gaskell
Board of Directors:	Patricia Martin Steve Yusko Ellen Hofard
Webmaster:	Bill Mulcahy
Barn Committee:	Phil Barker Volunteers needed
Museum Committee:	Gwen Gaskell Volunteers needed
Newsletter Committee:	Barbara Gaskell Gwen Gaskell Contributors welcome
Program Committee:	Steve Yusko

President's Message

Dear Members,

I am very excited to write my first letter in the newsletter. I am sure that I am "preaching to the choir" when I say how much I love Washington in the fall! This year has seen exceptionally warm weather, and colorful foliage- sort of feels like my welcome to the president's position - exceptionally warm and colorful! Maybe that becomes our theme for the year, for this letter at least!

The Board of Directors is warming up to the idea of delivering on our mission of bringing our collections into the community, made all the more challenging by our buildings being open only 8-10 days a year! For the month of October, we have an exhibit of porcelain souvenirs from the Lovell House Hotel and the Bradford House Hotel with images of the library at the Shedd Free Library and - we hope that the weather will hold so that we will be able to bring the old horse-drawn hearse to help celebrate Halloween at the town's Trunk or Treat on October 30. A new generation of goblins (and maybe adults!) will be introduced to our collection! If you have any ideas of how to exhibit our collection in the community, please send them along!

In addition to polishing up and exhibiting some items in our collection, we are assessing the Museum and School House buildings with a critical eye and professional assistance. We are evaluating some needed maintenance on the Museum and possibly a larger project at the School House. Keeping three properties in tip top shape sometimes elicits some colorful language!

And so that you can stay warm in your homes this winter and maintain your connection with us, Steve Yusko, Board Member and Program Coordinator, is actively recruiting presenters for our continuing monthly Zoom presentations on the second Monday

of the month (except December when people are so busy already). There are some popular repeat presenters and there are some new ones to keep us up to date. Most presentations are made possible by a grant from the NH Humanities Council.

One last hot topic – new and renewing memberships! Approximately 30% of our budget is funded by memberships and donations. We warmly thank those who already have a current membership, and, for those who don't yet have one, you would color our worlds beautiful if you would join today! Every single membership helps to expand our programs and preserve our collections.

Thank you for being part of the organization, for sharing your creative ideas, and for making history every day!

Warm regards, Susan Fairchild

The Story of Our Stage Curtain Restoration

Prior to the pandemic, the town, with the support of the WHS, applied for & received a Moose Plate Grant to clean, repair, & conserve the stage curtain in the upper hall of the meetinghouse. In mid-July, Chris Hadsel, Director of Curtains Without Borders, and fellow conservator, May Jo Davis, with the help of WHS members & town folks completed the task. You can view a short video of the process on our website - wnhhs.org; it's under the Projects heading.

Chris Hadsel returned to Washington for our Sep. regular meeting and entertained us with a presentation on curtains in northern New England and told us a bit about our own curtain. In case you missed this excellent presentation, the following is some of the info she gave about Washington's curtain.

The curtain was purchased in November of 1906 from O. L. Story, a prominent stage scenery company in Somerville, MA. The company produced a catalog of various standard elements from which to choose & create a unique curtain. Some of these, such as the two urns of flowers, are in our curtain. Because our curtain is at the front of the stage, it is considered a grand drape.

Pink curtains give way to the central scene of a modified Chillon Castle on an island in Lake Geneva, Switzerland. This was a common theme in many of O.L. Story curtains. It was a popular tourist site at the turn of the century because of Lord Byron's popular poem, "The Prisoner of Chillon". A bust of Lord Byron appears on the banner descending from the right side.

As is evident from our grand drape, O. L. Story liked to emblazon curtains with many flourishes of gold trimmings.

If you have not seen our grand drape, make it a point to stop in at the town hall often to try and get a glimpse of it. Unfortunately, it is most times rolled up to protect it from further fading by sun & light.

Washington's Grand Drape



Chris Hadsel and Susan Fairchild vacuuming the curtain



Postcard from Gettysburg: A Portal to Washington's Past

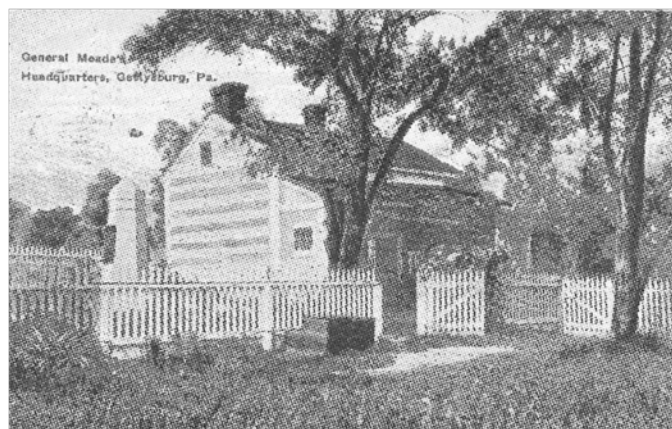
By Bill Mulcahy

Omar McCourry searched through the pile of postcards in a North Carolina antique shop. One soon caught his attention. On the front was a colorful picture of a little wooden farmhouse with the words "General Meade's Headquarters, Gettysburg, Pa." A lover of history, with a special interest in the Civil War, he knew that Meade commanded the forces that won a much-needed Union victory against the Confederate army of General Robert E. Lee at Gettysburg, PA, in July of 1863. The battle was perhaps the most pivotal battle of the American Civil War. This card looked very intriguing!

Omar recognized the postmark: "Gettysburg, P.A. July 3 3:30 PM 1913," as the date of a very special gathering commemorating the 50th anniversary of the famous battle. It was addressed to "Mrs. I. A Howard, 62 Bridgham St, Providence, R.I.," following the custom of that time to identify married women by referencing their husband's name. The short message read "Wednesday. Going to Haydns today. Awful hot yesterday. But I am feeling fine. Geo. H. Fletcher."

Omar's instinct told him that this humble postcard might have an interesting story to tell. Who was this George H. Fletcher? Was he one of the thousands of Civil War veterans attending the 50th anniversary commemoration? Had he fought in that battle? And if so, was it for the North, or the South? Who was the woman that he sent the postcard to?

He bought the card, and began a journey that, with the help of some other researchers, would eventually lead to the rediscovery of a fascinating story of a forgotten Washington resident – a story that we share with you now!



George Howard Fletcher was born in East Washington, NH, on March 6, 1844, to Samuel Fletcher and Rebecca Ames. A deacon in the Baptist Church, Samuel had a prosperous farm north of East Washington Center, along East Washington Road.

George worked on his parents' farm until the summer of 1862. The Civil War was in its second year, and George joined the Union army in response to the growing need for additional volunteers. On August 11, 1862, he enlisted for a 3-year term. Records show that he had blue eyes, brown hair, a fair complexion, and was 5' 9" tall. Enlistees between the ages of 18 and 20 needed parental consent, which Samuel Fletcher gave, signing a formal document.

On September 4, 1862, George was mustered into Company H of the newly formed 10th New Hampshire Volunteer Regiment as a private. Six other Washington men also joined Company H, including his uncle,

Francis P. Fletcher, 44, Samuel T. Farnsworth, Hiram I. Hoyt, George L. Mellen, Moses D. Proctor, and William F. Severance.

By October 4th the 10th New Hampshire was in Frederick, MD, when President Abraham Lincoln arrived. Lincoln appeared on the rear platform of his train car and bowed gracefully in response to their cheers. Over 70 years later, George could still recall the experience.

The 10th New Hampshire was assigned to the Virginia theater of operations and fought in many important battles in that area. At Fredericksburg (December 12-15, 1862), they deployed to protect the Union flank, and watched the devastating impact of the Confederates, positioned behind the stone wall on Marye's Heights, firing down into wave after wave of Union assault troops. When the final attack was ordered, the 10th New Hampshire was part of it. The movement got underway after sunset on December 13. One of the Washington men (not named) movingly related the experience in the history of the regiment included in the History of Washington, New Hampshire 1768-1886 (pages 193-205).

"We advanced over ground where all day long we have witnessed the slaughter of our Comrades. The line is formed as darkness and the smoke of battle settle upon us. Orders are given in subdued tones. We fully realize our position. Not a man falters; up we go over a steep bank and form successively in line of battle. The rebel batteries belch forth fire and death with renewed vigor. We come to a fence and quickly cross it. Our feet splash in human gore – yes, in loyal blood - "

This final attempt for the Union to take Marye's Heights also failed. The 10th New Hampshire retreated, having lost 53 men.

Other engagements of the war included action at Swift's Creek, the Bermuda Hundred Campaign, Cold Harbor, the Siege of Petersburg & Richmond, and Fair Oaks (a.k.a Battle of the 7 Pines).

As the Confederate Army left Richmond at the war's end, the 10th New Hampshire moved in, and George Fletcher would later recall standing guard to protect that city from the pillaging and looting by both sides.

Returning to New Hampshire for final duty, George was promoted to Corporal on June 1, 1865. Just three weeks later, on June 21, 1865, the 10th New Hampshire Volunteer Regiment was inactivated, and he returned to civilian life.

Amazingly, George came through the war without serious injury. But tragically, 195 men from his regiment did not survive, including three of the men from Washington who served with him in Company H: Samuel T. Farnsworth, Moses D. Proctor, and William F. Severance. On September 13, 1867, when the grateful people of Washington dedicated the first Civil War Monument in the state of New Hampshire, their names, along with nine others, were listed in honor on the new Soldier's Monument.

A year after his return to East Washington, George, still only 22, married 17-year-old Luthera C. Barney at the Baptist Church on July 1, 1866. Luthera was a hometown girl, the daughter of James Barney and Emeline Huntley.

They moved to Rhode Island, where George was first Deputy Superintendent, and then Superintendent, of the state Almshouse, and finally entered the insurance business. By 1890 they had settled in Providence and remained there.

George did not join the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R), the national fraternal association set up for Union veterans (like the American Legion today), because he could not stomach their smoke-filled meetings.

But he did join the Rhode Island Citizens' Historical Society and was elected to their Executive Committee. By the turn of the 20th Century, the aging Civil War veterans were starting to pass from the scene, and many of them were searching for ways to honor fallen comrades, and to find closure for things they themselves had experienced during the war. The 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg provided a significant opportunity for them. Planned as a massive outdoor "encampment" for veterans of both sides, the event took place from July 1 to 3, 1913. Over 50,000 veterans from both the Union and the Confederacy made the journey to attend, with almost four hundred coming from Rhode Island. The 10th New Hampshire Volunteer Infantry Regiment had not fought at Gettysburg (they were on a march from White House, VA to the South Anna River, VA at the time), but George must have felt a strong desire to attend. One can only imagine the memories and emotions that came flooding back from his own combat experiences as he walked the battlefield and talked with fellow veterans from both sides.

George Fletcher lived another 24 years after the Gettysburg reunion. He and Luthera had no children but enjoyed a long and happy marriage. In 1936, they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary, their marital longevity earning them the title of "Oldest Married Couple" at Rhode Island's annual Shrine Circus. Luthera, then 87, had gotten her hand caught in the wringer of their electric washing machine a couple of days earlier and attended with her hand wrapped in a bandage. Asked to share secrets of their marital success, they offered this sage advice: "Cooperate and have confidence in each other. Keep nothing from one another. Talk over with one another whatever you plan to do. Work hard."

Luthera (Barney) Fletcher passed away January 11th, 1937, aged 87. George Howard Fletcher soon followed his beloved wife, dying at his home in Providence on September 22nd, 1937. He was 93 years old and was buried next to Luthera in the Riverside Cemetery, Pawtucket, RI. By any measure, he had lived a full and extraordinary life.

You never know what fascinating history can be uncovered by really taking a look at even the humblest of artifacts that someone leaves behind, or what unintended consequences might come from taking, or not taking, a simple action. Because on July 2, 1913, the last day of the reunion at Gettysburg, George Howard Fletcher spent a few pennies, wrote out the little postcard, and mailed it to his wife's niece, Eda May (Wilkins) Howard, and because Eda May saved it – it survived, and somehow over the course of more than a century made its way to the North Carolina antique shop where Omar McCourry bought it and used it to re-discover George Fletcher's life story!

The WHS is thankful to Omar McCourry for sharing with us his discovery of George Fletcher's postcard, and for sharing many of the documents used in the writing of this story. We are especially grateful for his generous gift to us of the original postcard which made this story possible.

In addition to Omar McCourry, the following people conducted invaluable research for this story: Anne (Landis) Swann, Marion, NC; Lanham Bundy of the Providence (RI) Public Library; Alan Head of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Department of RI; Rebecca Valentine of the Rhode Island Historical Society; Mary Lou McGuire of the Richards Free Library, Newport, NH; Bill Mulcahy, Washington (NH) Historical Society.

Captain Samuel Jones

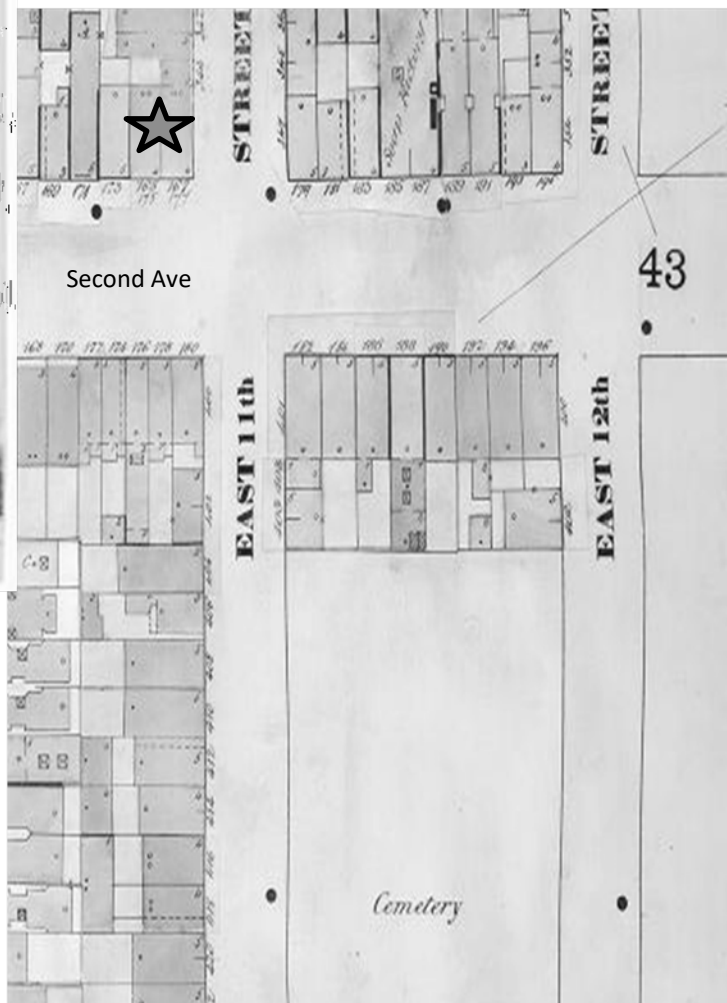
There have been various articles in our newsletter about Captain Samuel Jones and what became of him after his leg was buried here and he moved away. The past articles can be found in our newsletter archive in the fall issues of 2013, 2014 and 2017. The articles were written by Nat Taylor who did extensive research and answered many questions.

This summer Chris Sheldon, the great-great-great-grandson of the Captain by way of his daughter Charlotte contacted us about his own research into where Captain Jones was and is buried.

Chris lives in New York City and went exploring to St. Mark's cemetery where Samuel was originally buried in 1851. He took some pictures and then continued on to Evergreen Cemetery where Captain Jones and others were reburied in 1862. Chris talked to the caretaker and found that the area allotted to the reburial of graves from St. Mark's was quite small and that families were "stacked" to save space. If there were markers they were placed down deep or thrown away. Chris was unable to find any remains of a marker. There was a marker for the Charlotte and a couple of other family members.



St. Mark's Church in the Bowery is located at the corner of Second Avenue and 11th Street. There is a small cemetery behind it. The remains of Peter Stuyvesant, who died in 1672, are contained here as well as some ex-mayors and ex-governors.



St. Marks Church also had another graveyard across 2nd Ave on 11th Street dating to 1803, seen here on an old city map. An unknown number of individuals were buried there until burials were prohibited in 1851. The remains were removed to Evergreens Cemetery in Brooklyn and residences were built on the site.

ITEMS FOR SALE

FEATURING FAVORITE LANDMARKS OF WASHINGTON, NH

To order contact: Elaine Crandall (603) 495-3416 or ecrandall@verizon.net
Gwen Gaskell (603) 495-3231 or jimgwen@gsinet.net

Or, for quick service and convenient credit card payment, visit www.wnhhs.org and order on-line.

History of Washington. 1786-1886 Original reprint. **\$20.00**

Portrait of a Hill Town. 1876-1976 **\$15.00**

A Sacred Deposit. A History of the Meetinghouse. **\$8.00**

History Package. **\$40.00** Includes the *History*, *Portrait* and *Sacred Deposit* as well as a colored picture

A Cloud of Witnesses. A History of the Washington Congregational Church **\$8.00**

Trivet. **\$5.00** A 6" x 6" ceramic trivet or tile, suitable for hot or cold, with a leather backing, featuring a color photograph of the three steepled buildings in the center of town. Gift boxed.

Glass Medallion. **\$5.00** 3" medallion depicts either the Town Hall or the District #5 School House.

New Walking Tour of Washington Center booklet. **\$5.00**

New Mugs \$5.00 each. Choose the iconic Town Common buildings or the East Washington SchoolHouse #5.

New Apron. **\$17.00.** Our wonderful new butcher style apron carries an image of 3 antique eggbeaters surrounded with text "You can't beat can't beat the history in Washington, NH." It's made of a 7.5-oz, 55.45 cotton/polyester blend and measures 34"x28." One size fits most.

New Tote Bag. **\$20.00.** This spacious tote bag is beautifully embroidered with a choice of 2 colorful images -- either the Washington Bandstand or the WHS sign. Made of 10-oz cotton canvas, it has two side pockets, 28" handles, and measures 14"x18"x6".

Old Fashioned Toys. **\$5 each.** 3 toys available; Paddle Ball, Cup & Ball Toss and OxenYoke puzzle

Doll Kits. **\$5.00 each** 2 build your own doll kits available; Spoon Doll and Yarn Doll.

Quill Pen. **\$3.00**

Is there a red dot on your mailing label?

That means your membership has expired.

You can renew on-line at www.wnhhs.org or by mail using the form in this newsletter.

Washington Historical Society
PO Box 90
Washington, NH 03280

ANNUAL MEMEBERSHIP DUES are \$10 for an individual and \$15 for a family (including children under 16). For those who would like to contribute more to help us cover our expenses, we have a sustaining membership for \$25. The membership year is August 1 through July 31. We appreciate your continued interest and support of our projects. New members are always welcome. If you would like to join us as a member, please complete the form below and send to THE WASHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, PO BOX 90, WASHINGTON, NH 03280. If you know of someone who might be interested in our newsletter, please let us know or pass this one on to them. YOU CAN NOW JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP ON-LINE AND PAY BY CREDIT CARD. Visit our website to learn how www.wnhhs.org

Name: _____

Participating family names: _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone # Winter _____ Summer _____ Cell _____

Email: _____

Membership level: \$10 Individual _____ \$15 Family _____ \$25 Sustaining _____

PLEASE NOTE: As a non-profit historical society, we qualify with many companies for matching grants provided the company you work for, or are retired from, supports such benefits.

Email: washingtonhistoricalsociety@wnhhs.org