



Spring is springing up from the winter that almost wasn't!

In this issue is the exclusive story, behind the story, of the "Ghost Cemetery". Thanks to a very dedicated investigation by a VOCA member acting on a tip of an almost obscure cemetery of which no records can be found, the details of this mysterious find to be disclosed later in this issue.



It's time to get ready for the new season. As always there is plenty of work to be done but time to work on the task at hand is frequently difficult, however many members are able to make some improvements in their projects each year. We may move at a snails pace at times, but we do keep moving. Don't forget the spring meeting, May 5th, 2012 at the Wardsboro Town Hall in Wardsboro, Vermont. It's located on Main Street in the center of town, just off route 100. For reservation send \$10.00 per person to Jan Hull, c/o Wardsboro Historical Group, Wardsboro, VT 05355.

There should be plenty of sunshine for all this year, so get your favorite beverage ready and sit by the window in that comfy chair you often enjoy and see what we have for you! We will begin with a message from VOCA President, Tom Giffin, a note on the passing of long time VOCA member Bessie Irish, a thank you for Charlies help in getting a Ferrisburgh Cemetery re-opened, a little trivia, and some Civil War era letters.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT SPRING 2012

This winter in Vermont will be known as the winter that never was. Having flocks of robins in my backyard in February and seeing large flocks of geese fly overhead all winter was rather peculiar to say the least. (My brother saw a robin on the top of Bolton Valley on February 1st.) However, as I am writing my report, the weather station is predicting a big snowstorm headed to the northeast! Hopefully with this early spring, communities will be able to get an early start on cemetery restoration. Unfortunately, Vermont's seasons do not always allow the luxury of time on these cemetery projects. If you have general maintenance to do in some of your neglected burial grounds in your town, i.e. brush trimming/removal, and general clean up. I would suggest you contact your local high school's athletic director/coach and ask if a school team could spend a few hours

working in their town's cemetery. Most students are required to do some community service for their graduation requirements this makes for a unique volunteer activity for them. The high schools and colleges that I have contacted locally for help have always provided me with willing students to help clean up a cemetery.

I was informed that the Vermont Department of Correction's work crews are planning on doing some work in Ferrisburg's Cemeteries for the first time this spring. This DOC program continues to gain in popularity with more and more communities statewide. Many counties are already utilizing this resource for neglected burial grounds. If interested in the availability of a DOC work crew, contact Rutland Field Office Director, Keith Tallon at (802) 786-5099. I hope to see many of you at our spring meeting in Wardsboro. The meeting will be at the Wardsboro Town Hall on Main Street. The cost is \$10.00 per person. For reservations, send your check to Jan Hull c/o Wardsboro History Group, PO Box 33, Wardsboro, VT 05355.

Please look closely at your expiration date on this newsletter and update your membership if necessary. VOCA is always recruiting new members and your help in this endeavor is greatly appreciated. If you know of someone who is interested in the history of Vermont, please give them an application which is included in the newsletter.

We have had some interest in the editor's position, but nothing finalized as of yet, so we are still looking for assistance in this area. We are also always looking for interesting articles for the newsletter. If you have an item of interest, please forward it to the editor or myself. I am always available to give a presentation on VOCA for any organization that is looking for a speaker. I have some scheduled for this spring, but would be able to squeeze some in if there was some interest. If anyone has agenda items or ideas for VOCA, please give me a call or send an email.

TOM GIFFIN
VOCA PRESIDENT

In Memory of Bessie Irish

VOCA member since January 12th, 1983, Bessie M. (Ryan) Irish of Essex Junction, Vermont, who was a very frequent attendee at VOCA meetings, passed away at the age of 94, on Thursday March 8, 2012 at Birchwood Nursing Home in Burlington. Born in Merrimac, MA on October 19, 1917, she was the daughter of the late Basil and Bessie May (Deminie) Ryan. She married Robert M. Irish in Colchester on October 16, 1937. Bessie was a member of the Vermont Old Cemetery Association. She retired from Williston Central School, where she was employed as a tutor for the learning disabled. Prior to that, she was employed at the Baird Center for children and as a nurses aide at the Mary Fletcher Hospital. She leaves behind: her daughter Cynthia Badger and husband Michael of Essex Junction; her four sons: Adrian and wife Karen of Ferrisburgh; Jerry and wife Ginny of Brattleboro; Dwight and wife Debbie of Monkton; Brian of Brattleboro; a daughter-in-law Nellie Irish of Rutland; fifteen grandchildren; twenty nine great grandchildren many nieces, nephews and cousins.

Trivia: **Death from biting one's Tongue**

[Allan Pinkerton](#) (1819-1884) [wiki], famous for creating the Pinkerton Detective Agency and developing investigative techniques such as surveilling a suspect and doing undercover work, died of an infection after biting his tongue when he slipped on a sidewalk!

Ferrisburgh's Cemeteries reopened.

Hurricane Irene brought damage and disruption to many historic Vermont cemeteries. Amidst all this bad news, it felt like a good time to share some good news.....

Graveyard Preservation Is Our Business

My name is Silas Towler, and I've been an active member of the Ferrisburgh Historical Society for 30 years. One of the Society's roles in our community is to serve as the unofficial 'overseer' of the 11 town owned cemeteries. These tend to be small neighborhood or family yards, set mostly along quiet dirt roads. Over the years, we've had three bouts of work on these old plots. For two of these work sessions, we who volunteered listened, learned, and benefited tremendously by having the leadership and assistance of VOCA's treasurer, Charles Marchant. Charlie seems to know about all there is to know about old cemeteries, he's a great teacher and he isn't afraid to get his hands dirty. But I digress.....In June 2009, I received a phone call from my friend Neil. His wife had died, was to be cremated and her ashes spread, but Neil and his daughter really wanted to place a memorial stone in the Collins Cemetery. It's right along the road leading to their house, but hadn't had a burial for decades. Actually, none of our town owned cemeteries has had a burial for decades. Neil asked if I knew how to go about placing a stone. I'd pondered this issue before. Here we have these entire towns owned burial grounds, they cost us money every year in mowing fees, but they really aren't being operated as active cemeteries. It took Neil's call to stir me to action. I asked Neil to let me work on this.....

My first thought was to call Charlie. I had an idea that he'd probably run into this before, maybe in his town. And, he had. Charlie told me what they'd developed as a policy in his town. Among the things Charlie said was that the town needed the money, and that he felt these yards will only benefit from recent involvement. The main points of the policy are, to paraphrase: 1-The style, shape, material and size of any stone placed has to match that of the pre-existing stones within that cemetery; 2-The actual location of any new stone is subject to the approval of the select board, to maintain the ambience of each cemetery and because of maintenance issues(ease of mowing around); 3-It is the responsibility of the family of the deceased to determine whether anyone has ever been buried in the spot chosen; 4-The family must pay the Town a fee, to be determined. These all sound like reasonable requirements to me, and they sounded reasonable to Neil. However, what about that clause..."must

determine if anyone has ever been buried"... As luck would have it, I had recently attended a Charlotte Historical Society meeting during which there was a report on work done on one of their cemeteries. The report included a mention of work done by Cameron Wesson, a Charlotte resident and Chair of the Anthropology Department at the University of Vermont. In this particular cemetery, with students assisting, Cameron had surveyed the soil looking for unmarked burial sites. I called Cameron, told him of our situation, and asked him about this process. He could not have been more helpful. Apparently, as I understand it, the magnetic resonance of disturbed soil is different than that of undisturbed soil. So, when determining if ground has ever been disturbed, in other words, if anyone has ever been buried in a particular spot, basically an MRI is taken of the area in question. Cameron told me that as a UVM professor, he sees himself as a public servant. He works for us, and if he could help us he would be glad to. With some of his students, he would take a survey of a predetermined area within a graveyard, and determine if that soil had ever been disturbed. He was willing to come to a Select board meeting, and/or a Historical Society meeting, to describe the process. After the survey, he would post his report online. Armed with Charlie's recommended policy, and Cameron's willingness to provide technical support, Neil and I approached the Ferrisburgh Select board with our request. After some hesitation and deliberation, the Board agreed to our request to erect a stone. Neil does some stone sculpture, so he bought a slab of marble as the markers of the Collins Cemetery dictated, shaped the top to match the other markers, had it engraved, and now he and his daughter can now catch a glimpse of it as they drive up their road on their way to and from home.

A happy ending.

Trivia: Death by Jury Demonstration

After the [Civil War](#), controversial Ohio politician [Clement Vallandigham](#) [wiki] became a highly successful [lawyer](#) who rarely lost a case. In 1871, he defended Thomas McGehan who was accused of shooting

one Tom Myers during a barroom brawl. Vallandigham's defense was that Myers had accidentally shot himself while drawing his pistol from a kneeling position. To convince the jury, Vallandigham decided to demonstrate his theory. Unfortunately, he grabbed a loaded gun by mistake and ended up shooting himself! By dying, Vallandigham succeeded in demonstrating the plausibility of the accidental shooting and got his client acquitted.

The story behind the Ghost Cemetery and photo on the front page:

Late last fall, Valerie Legh-Harriss asked me if I knew anything about a cemetery she had spotted behind the Mt. Vernon barn on Route 149 just east of Granville and west of the bank. No, there are no records a cemetery at that location. Driving by soon after that: Yes, it looks like a cemetery up there on the hill behind the barn.

Yesterday, February 28, 2012 we decided it was time to find out who was buried there. Val went to the door for permission to visit the cemetery. Yes, you 2 cemetery buffs may walk up there if we want to; but those are only those fake stones you buy at Halloween put there for a party. We decided a picture taken by the barn would do, we did not want to disturb the ghosts under those stones!

Peggy

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Trivia: Death at a Talk Show

[Jerome Irving Rodale](#) [wiki] was a proponent of healthy eating. He was an early advocate for organic farming and sustainable agriculture, founder of Organic Farming and Gardening magazine and Rodale Press.

After bragging that he would "live to 100, unless I'm run down by a sugar-crazy taxi driver", Rodale died of a heart attack while being interviewed on the Dick Cavett Show in 1971. Appearing fast asleep,

Dick Cavett joked "Are we boring you, Mr. Rodale?" before discovering that his 72-year-old guest had indeed died. The show was never aired.

1864

Next are letters from three Vermonters who served in the Civil War:

(these are copied as they appeared in the original news print)

The following from a Stowe boy to his parents dated at Camp Pratt, Western, VA.

"My health is good, although I have seen some hard times, (the hardest times of my life) since I wrote to you. I have been in the saddle thirteen days and several nights, and rode over six hundred miles, and have been in three battles. I was four days without a bite to eat. I was wounded twice in one battle (flesh wounds.) once in the arm and in the leg. And riding for six days without having them dressed, they have become quite sore and painful. I will try to give you a short description of the trip. On the 12th, the 34th Ohio, 2nd VA, and two companies of the 1st VT Calvary started for the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. There we routed the rebels, killing and wounding several, with some prisoners. They left fifty nine barrels of flour, 5000 rounds of shell and shot for cannon, and forty thousand rifle cartridges; then we marched for two days, without seeing any of the enemy, and on the morning of the 3rd day we came in site of a picket post. We charged on the post and took every picket. Then we went into camp and took one company that was stationed there, with one hundred stands of arms and ten thousand cartridges. The next was at Withville, at the railroad. There we pitched battle, and such a slaughter you never saw; it was hand to hand. There our Colonel was killed, and forty men and officers killed and wounded. But to my certain knowledge we killed and wounded three to their one. The fight was in as pretty a town as I ever saw. Their force was 1,800, with one section of artillery. Our force was 1,000. They shot from the doors and windows, and every where else. Our company took their battery, killing the captain and six gunners. When the fight was over, every street every street and alley was covered with dead and

wounded rebels. We took one hundred and sixty prisoners and burned the railroad bridge and several mills, and then burned the town. But I will not try to describe the scene for I cannot. You will excuse the shortness of this, as I am so weak and worn out with loss of blood and riding, that I can scarcely write at all, though my wounds are light, one in the left arm and the other in the left leg. I have several ball holes through my cloths, and one through my canteen. (Signed) Geo Salles"

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The following from a Cambridge boy, Spelman Seely, who is a member of Company B Mass 1st Heavy Artillery, writes to his brother in Cambridge and we extract as follows:

"Fort Whippel Va Feb 7, 1864

Dear Brother- When we left Long Island we went in an old transport Boat and I did not see fire for eight days, nor but a little to eat. I was sick on the boat and took cold and have got a cough which is a little better now. We stopped in Alexandria over night. It was a lonesome place. It is a pleasant place where we are, the fort is called one of the best in Virginia. There will be 45 guns when they are all in. and all round the fort are rifle pits and there are a number of forts in sight, in full view of Washington. Georgetown, and Alexandria, and the timber is all cut down, and looks a little lonesome to see it so. We are in view of General Lee's (the Rebel) where he lived in time of peace. You think in Vermont, that I should have done better to have enlisted there but I enlisted on my own freewill, and there is no one to blame. I have seen a little of the world, and if I live I expect to see a great deal more. I expect you know where Long Bridge is. It is in site of our fort. Yesterday there was a train that runs into the draw and it killed 17 and wounded a great many. They had been home on furlough and were on their return to their regiments. I expect you have a lot of snow in Cambridge but we have none here. It is like May here. We have mud here the same as you wrote last winter. We have artillery in the forenoon and dress parade at 4 P M. Our barracks are good ones and we have enough to eat and there is a lot of bread given to the poor around here. I will close this for now and want you to write the news of my old town where I have spent all of my past days. Do

you have any good items in the *News-dealer*; send it to me and I will read it with care and then I shall get the news from home while in the distant land."

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The third is also from a Cambridge boy. Jeffersonville, May 30th, 1864. Mr. Editor – I send you a copy of a letter from Luke Drury, son of L. B. Drury of this town, who was in the great battle with Gen Butler.

"Near City Point, Va. May 18th 1864

It has been a long time since I have heard from you, and I suppose it has also been a long time since you have heard from me. We have been rather busy since we arrived here, fourteen days ago. We have been in action eight days. Our company is very near played out; out of ninety six men, we have eighteen left for duty; we have five killed, thirty wounded and eighteen taken prisoners, and the rest are sick and detached. We went into the fight five days ago, and were under fire three days; had about 45 men, when we went in, and when the regiment came out, our company had 4 men to come out with it. Davis, Notee, Hadly, and myself. They came very near having the rest of our company with company I. I was ordered out to protect the right flank and join the 27th regiment. We had to go through thick brush. I was right guide. Just as I got to the road I ran within two rods of the of the rebel colors. They told me to surrender but I could not see it. I told the Lieutenant that the rebels were to our rear, and he ordered us to fall back to the regiment. I returned back. The rebs told me to come in, they would not hurt me, but I did not see it, and they put a shower of bullets after me. I got back safe. It was awful, only 4 of us got out safe. I thank God that I am safe at present, how long I shall be, I cannot tell. Notee is on fatigue today-he will write when he can get a chance. (Signed) Luke T. Drury, Co K, 25th Mass Vols."

2011-2012 Headstones

Thomas Giffin, President, 61 East Washington St, Rutland VT, 05701 tgiftv@msn.com802-773-3253
 Dianne Leary, 1st VP,..... 4670 Greenbush Rd, Charlotte, VT, 05445..... 802-881-2754
 Chris Book, Treasurer, 44 North Main St, Rutland, VT, 05701 802-773-6252
 Dianne Leary, Assistant Grants Administrator ...dleary123@yahoo.com!..... 802-881-2754
 Arthur Hyde, 2nd VP&Grants Admin, 1991 Upper Plain, Bradford, Vt 05033 802-222-4088
 Harry Fisher, Membership& Newsletter Ed, P O Box 3282, Nampa, Idaho, 83653..... 800-675-8815
 Merci Fisher, Assistant Newsletter Ed., PO Box 3282, Nampa, Idaho, 83653.....800-675-8815
 Justin Giffin, Asst Treas, 61 E Washington St, Rutland, VT justingiff@hotmail.com..... 802-779-1671
 Charles E Marchant, Sec, P O Box 132, Townshend Vt, 05353cemassoc@svcable.net.....802-365-7937
 Edmund Wilcox, Exe Board, 4996 Georgia Shore Rd., St Albans Vt, 05478802-524-3318

WEB MASTER

Darryl Harris webmaster@voca58.org
VOCA Website www.voca58.org

FOOTSTONES

2013 **Wesly Mowry, P O Box 297, Hartland, VT, 05048**802-436-3383
 2013 **Richard Howrigan, P O Box 16, Fairfield Vt, 05455**802-827-6513
 2014 **Robert Hooper, 44 Charity St, Burlington Vt, 05401** hooper9999@aol.com802-862-0708
 2011 **Vacant**Are you the one we are looking for?.....
 2012 **Ruth Barton, P O Box 309, Putney, Vt, 05301**802-254-1128
 2014 **Chris Book, 44 N Main, Rutland, VT, 05701**802-773-6252

Vermont Old Cemetery Association is a non-profit organization founded in 1958 to “encourage the restoration and preservation of neglected and abandoned cemeteries in the State of Vermont”. Meetings are held twice yearly on the 1st Saturday in May and October. The VOCA newsletter is published by the editor four times a year to coincide with the seasons. The IRS granted VOCA tax exempt status 3/21/1969 (Ref BUR EO59-26)

VOCA Books For Sale

The 3rd edition of “Burial Grounds of Vermont”, lay-flat binding \$35. Addendum to 1st & 2nd editions \$4.00, “Stones&Bones”, a teacher’s resource packet \$24.00. These prices include shipping costs; we are not required to collect Vt sales tax. Send check made out to “VOCA” and a return address label, if possible, to “ Charles E Marchant, VOCA Secretary, P O Box 132, Townshend, Vermont, 05353”

VOCA County Representatives

***** These are people who will come help you with your VOCA grant application *****

Addison- Betty R Bell 802-453-3947	Grand Isle- vacant
Bennington – Jean Kosche – 802-447-2241	Lamoille- Deanna French 802-888-4537
Orange- Arthur Hyde 802-222-4088	Orleans- Wanda Webster 802-525-3550
Caledonia – vacant	Rutland- Cliff Giffin 802-773-3743
Chittenden- Robert Hooper- 802-862-0708	Washington- Vacant
Essex- Richard Colburn- 802-723-4833	Windham- Charles Marchant 802-365-7937
Franklin- Edmund Wilcox- 802-524-3318	
Windsor- Ken Barrett- 802-875-2941	

Circle One

Renewal + member number / Change of address / New member

Name _____ member # _____

Address _____

Town/City _____

State _____ zip _____

Telephone # _____

e-mail _____

Dues are for calendar year: 1 year \$10.00, 5 years \$40.00 and lifetime is \$140.00

**** A new member joining in Oct or Nov or Dec will have dues applied to the following year ****

Make check payable to VOCA, mail to: Chris Book, VOCA Treasurer, 44 North Main Street, Rutland, Vermont 05701

Vermont Old Cemetery Association
Harry Fisher, Editor
P O Box 3282
Nampa, Idaho, 83653