

VERMONT ARCHIVES AND MANUSCRIPTS



This occasional section alerts researchers to the rich resources acquired regularly by Vermont's historical repositories. News of accessions and openings of processed collections, as well as longer evaluative descriptions of research collections are welcome. Please send submissions to the Editor, Vermont History.

The Vermont Military Records Project: The Civil War Records

By Kelly Nolin

In his official report for the year ending October 1865, Adjutant General Peter Washburn wrote: "The records and files which have accumulated in this office since the commencement of the rebellion, possess a value which cannot be estimated, and their loss would be irreparable. . . . I have been enabled to keep very full record of the military history of nearly every man in service from this State. The records are in constant use, and will be for a long time . . . I respectfully suggest that some measures should be authorized for securing the safety of . . . these records and files from casualty by fire."¹

When the state arsenal in Montpelier was struck by lightning on the night of August 31, 1945, and burnt to the ground, nearly fifty cartons of records were somehow salvaged from the wreckage. The storage of Vermont's military records in the old arsenal on College Street had



Two views of the U.S. Arsenal complex in Montpelier. Above, ca. 1890; below, on September 1, 1945, the day after fire destroyed the central building.

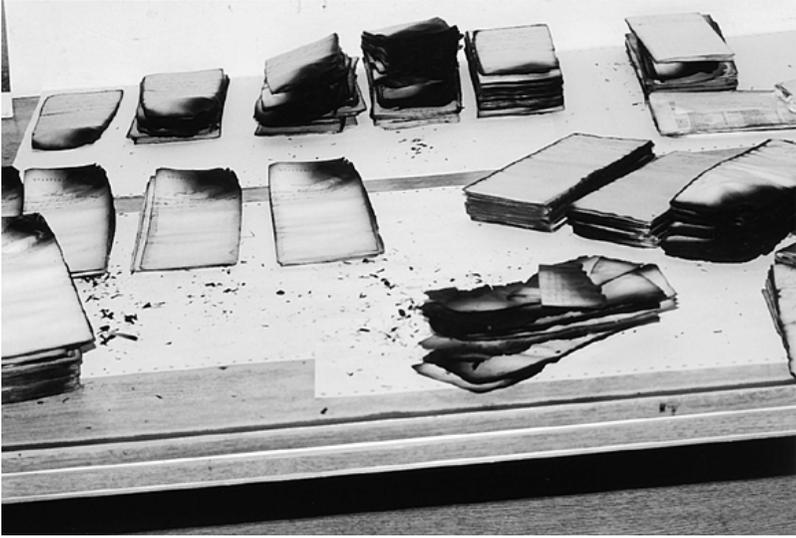


been a contentious issue for many years. The large brick building, built in the mid- to late 1860s, lacked both a fire suppression system and climate control. On August 29, 1945, the adjutant general went before the Public Records Commission to formally recommend the removal and transfer of the military archive. Two days later, the arsenal went up in flames, and with it much of Vermont's documented military history. Today, many of the remaining documents exhibit at least some water damage; most have sustained significant fire damage. With the original order lost, those who triaged the documents following the disaster nearly sixty years ago made little attempt to arrange the fragile materials, although there seems to have been an effort to sort the records according to military unit or subject matter.

For almost sixty years the records remained as their rescuers left them. Historians had long bemoaned the condition of these important documents and the tightly wrapped bundles had been prodded and pried open by frustrated researchers over the years, further worsening their fragile physical condition and already unreliable organization. Although the legislature turned down the first request for archival funding in 1997, success came at last in 1999 due to the efforts of persistent and devoted military historians Michael Bellesiles and Howard Coffin, of Director of Central Services and Public Records A. John Yacavoni, and of State Archivist D. Gregory Sanford. Senator Vincent Illuzzi and the Senate Institutions Committee, and Commissioner of Buildings and General Services Thomas Torti ensured both initial and continued financial support of the project through Capital Construction Bill appropriations in 1999, 2000, and 2001. Thanks to their combined efforts this important archival initiative was undertaken and Vermont's military heritage was salvaged.

What I faced when first confronted with these fifty forlorn cartons of damaged military records, and how those approximately 200,000 burnt pieces of paper went from their post-salvage stage to their present secure and accessible status (via microfilm), is beyond the scope of this article. It was a challenge deserving its own narrative in another venue. But the hope of the project was that what began in October 1999 as an archivist's nightmare might prove, in the end, to be an historian's dream. Now that the project is nearly complete, a wealth of new primary source material has become available, and from that foundation will certainly arise a more comprehensive understanding of Vermont's proud military heritage and history.

The Civil War records account for perhaps three-quarters of what remains of the adjutant general's original archive. These salvaged military records provide a rare glimpse into the busy office of Vermont's



6th Vermont, Monthly Returns, 1864. These records were so severely burnt and damaged by water that they cannot be handled. Does enough text survive to make filming worthwhile? The documents will fail on being unfolded and severe charring will obscure much of the text that does survive. Photo by the author.

adjutant general during four years of civil war. The sheer volume of paperwork must have nearly overwhelmed the small and overworked staff. The busy clerks received 6,200 letters between October 1863 and October 1864 alone.² Along with the pressures of paperwork, the adjutant general also bore the unenviable responsibility of inspiring recruitment and ensuring a continuous flow of soldiers from Vermont's well-tapped fountain of patriotism, as Washington continued throughout the war to demand more and always more men for its armed services.

New voices have emerged from the salvaged records. Homer Stoughton recounts his memories of the wounding of General George Stannard at Gettysburg. Colonel Francis Randall provides his own detailed account of the 13th Vermont Regiment in action at Gettysburg. Several officers of the 9th Vermont Regiment add their testimony to their unit's claim to be the first to enter Richmond in April of 1865. And Merritt Barber informs us of the conspicuous part played by



Civil War records hastily bundled together following the fire in August 1945. The paper band bears the description, “Civil War Misc. Poor Cond[ition].”

General Lewis A. Grant and the Old Vermont Brigade at the final breakthrough of Petersburg’s formidable defenses on April 2, 1865.³

Regimental morning reports, forwarded bi-weekly to the adjutant general, and monthly returns of alterations, bear witness to year-round casualty and illness rates. Ordnance store and quartermasters’ vouchers inform in detail of military supply and consumption. And the multi-faceted richness of the adjutant general’s correspondence alone contains material enough for numerous Civil War dissertations.

Quantifiable data from the thousands of muster, descriptive, and pay rolls provide new insights into regimental demographics and literacy levels. Enlistment contracts and rolls, as well as medical inspection certificates, yield information on both the individual and collective physical characteristics of Vermont’s Civil War volunteers. Forwarding rolls

of substitutes and conscripted men describe the manpower contributions of various areas within our state. Guardian consent forms illustrate in very human terms the impact of war on mid-nineteenth-century families. Accompanying many of the remaining enlistment contracts are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of small slips of paper bearing the handwritten permission of parents allowing their underage sons to enlist in the service of the United States. Later in the war, when printed consent forms became more widely available and enlistment contracts themselves contained an appropriate section to be completed by those under twenty-one years of age, much of the simple charm of these informal documents was sacrificed to the new convenience.

Sometimes the homely character of a parent's written consent reflected the very human nature of the sacrifice asked of Civil War-era families. In perusing the consent forms it is quite easy to sympathize with the emotions these parents must have experienced as they signed a legal document ceding the remainder of their sons' minorities to the service of their country, even though they must have well understood that service threatened an all-too-brief future for their boys. A letter from a Sherburne selectman gives voice to what must have been a very common sentiment: "The father of Wm P Henry, whose name is upon the roll [of Company H, 14th Vermont] hereunto attached, I am informed from good authority is willing that his son should enlist, and will make no effort to get him released, but objects to signing a paper signifying his consent fearing that his son will be killed and that he will regret that his name is signed to such a paper."⁴

The rules were very clear about accepting minors into federal service, and for the most part recruiting officers took them seriously. The saga of one sixteen-year-old's enlistment in the 17th Vermont Regiment in December 1863 survives as an example of the trouble that could result from underage enlistments. In the company of friends on a spree, Hubert Worcester apparently traveled to Burlington and enlisted in the 17th Regiment without the knowledge or consent of his parents. Upon learning of the enlistment, Mr. and Mrs. Worcester notified the recruiting officer and asked that their son be released from his contract and returned home to Warren. They reiterated those facts in a letter to the adjutant general and again urged the speedy release of their son. Then, almost matter-of-factly, Emmaline and Almond Worcester added: "We have had 5 sons in the army. One has been honorably discharged, and 4 are now in active service. Hubert is our youngest son, and we would be exceedingly glad to keep him at home with us. We therefore petition and pray you to release him from any further obligation as a soldier under his present contract. . . . Have we not given our share of sons to

the service of the country? And shall not we be allowed to keep this our youngest with us . . . We hope Sir that you will say that we may.”⁵ The Worcester’s contribution to the war effort was obviously deemed sufficient, for there is no evidence that Hubert, once released from his contract, reenlisted. And all five Worcester boys who saw active service returned home to Warren alive.

All prospective recruits underwent a medical examination prior to being accepted into the United States service. The so-called “Form for examining a Recruit” today seems at least moderately humorous in its attempt to be thorough yet concise. The one-page form begins with the name of the recruit, his age, occupation, and place of birth. A series of questions follows requiring appropriate commentary on the soundness of various limbs and organs. The form was probably devised to infuse a bit of rigor into a notoriously lax system of physical examination. But rather than taking a recruit’s medical history piecemeal, the form got right down to business with its first question: “Have you ever been sick?”⁶ which we can only imagine left the door wide open to the personal agenda of the particular recruit. If one was absolutely aching to fight, the answer presumably would be “no, I’ve never been sick, not once, nary a snuffle nor case of the ague.” While if one shuddered at the very thought of military service, the question would likely provoke an emphatic “yes!” and the catalog of complaints would go on and on in an effort to demonstrate that the recruit had never spent a well day in his entire miserable life. Of course, on a serious note, physical examinations were conducted primarily to detect epilepsy, head trauma, fractures, or intemperance. Also, according to the records, many Vermonters were rejected for suspicion of tender age, ominous chest symptoms, feeble-mindedness, running sores or other obvious infections and, as Charles Spends found upon attempting to enlist into the ranks of the all-white 10th Vermont Regiment, African-American parentage.⁷

Each regiment generated its own series of correspondence, much of it a faithful reflection of the very political nature of the Civil War volunteer service. Many commanding officers corresponded with state authorities like proud parents clamoring for attention to be drawn to their particular child who, for one reason or another, was the most efficient in this or the most proficient in that.

Recommendations for promotion provided a forum in which to relate little-known and unsung acts of bravery. They tell of officers devoting special attention to the wounded while under fire, or individual soldiers being present with their units in battle though entitled by illness to be confined to quarters. This kind of pride seems pardonable and even endearing; however, within the regimental correspondence can be

found a generous number of letters relating to issues of promotion or the commissioning of officers which, it might be assumed, the adjutant general found anything but endearing. In fact, judging by the volume of evidence at hand, the widespread squabbling over promotion must have driven Peter Washburn nearly to distraction at times. It is certainly fascinating after so many years to be privy to the regimental feuds and favoritism revealed in these official recommendations.

For instance, Captain Seaton, Company F, 1st United States Sharpshooters, wrote expressing concern that a couple of unfit favorites of regimental commander Colonel Hiram Berdan might be recommended for the vacant 2nd lieutenantcy over the “sturdy stalwart Green Mountain Boy” Seaton advocated. Not only are Berdan’s men not of the Vermont Company, Seaton informs General Washburn, they are unpopular, ignorant of tactics, and of poor educational background. His man, on the other hand, was faithful, intelligent, and brave, and should have received honorable mention in Berdan’s after-action report on the Battle of Bull Run had not Colonel Berdan, Seaton claims, been too far in the rear to observe his gallantry. Colonel Berdan also wrote to General Washburn, defending his preference. Thanks to the machinations of a Company clique, he asserted, his own choice for the commission had been recently passed over for promotion during his, their commander’s, absence from the regiment. Berdan did not intend the slight should happen again. Incidental to this particular episode of military infighting is the fact that Captain Seaton wrote while under arrest and awaiting court-martial proceedings on unspecified charges brought against him by Colonel Berdan.⁸

Things were little better in the 8th Vermont Regiment, where there was apparently no love lost between Lt. Colonel Henry Dutton and Colonel Stephen Thomas. A bone of particular contention was the appointment of major in the regiment. Thomas obviously did not approve of Dutton’s choice and Dutton felt it his duty to inform the adjutant general that, quite frankly, Colonel Thomas would not approve the recommendation of his second-in-command simply because Colonel Thomas could not “own” the man.⁹

Meanwhile, Colonel Breed Hyde was busy vetoing Major Thomas Seaver’s recommendations for promotion in the 3rd Vermont Regiment. Hyde wrote that Major Seaver had presumed on his colonel’s absence to seize the opportunity to forward his preferences to Vermont, and to add insult to injury, Seaver’s preferences were gratuitous and just happened to be very much at variance with his own choices. Colonel Hyde claimed that Major Seaver held a grudge against his commanding officer, and what he felt was far worse, possessed an “extreme love of command.”¹⁰

In the 10th Vermont, a war of wills raged between Major Chandler and Lt. Col. Henry. It seems a petition had been circulated among the men, apparently at the instigation of Major Chandler, to promote one captain to the office of major over the ranking company commander, which Col. Henry felt to be a great injustice. After performing his own informal verbal survey of the men, Henry found that they held no grudge against the senior captain and were guilty only of a desire to please their major by affirming his choice. Colonel Henry implored the adjutant general not to allow his preference to be overruled, for if the major held sway, the colonel's command of the men "would not be worth a straw." Worse, whenever Henry did not please his officers they would hold what he referred to as a "town meeting" to try to impel their commanding officer to do their bidding. This was the beginning of the end with Major Chandler, Colonel Henry vowed; "one of us will have to leave," and he assured General Washburn it would not be he, though he did admit to being just a little concerned over the fact that Major Chandler was Governor John Gregory Smith's cousin.¹¹

Among the most interesting records in the adjutant general's archive are those generated by Vermont's three state agents, or commissioners, assigned by Governor Frederick Holbrook shortly after McClellan's Peninsula Campaign in 1862 to three of the north's largest cities to attend to the needs of Vermont's war casualties. These agents were responsible for reporting information on soldiers admitted to hospitals within their respective jurisdictions. They sent the governor and adjutant general regular detailed casualty and recuperation reports on individual soldiers that included not only name, military unit, and nature of the wound or illness, but also provided personal details such as existing family, residence, status of the soldier's finances, his prospect for recovery, and sometimes his frame of mind. The hospital commissioners were also responsible for ensuring that all of Vermont's sick or wounded stable enough to withstand the journey were forwarded to one of the state's three general hospitals, at Burlington, Brattleboro, or Montpelier, whichever was nearest to the particular soldier's home town. These state agents kept the folks at home informed of the welfare of their soldiers. They issued writing paper, stamps, small gifts of food, pocket change, and transportation passes. They fulfilled what must have been one of the war's most difficult jobs, both physically and emotionally; 140 years later their many acts of kindness still stand out as shining examples of the war's (and Vermont's) compassionate and humane side.

Commissioner Frank F. Holbrook, son of Governor Holbrook, left a remarkably rich archive documenting his work on behalf of the sick or

wounded in Washington, D.C. The series contains not only Holbrook's voluminous and detailed official reports but also much of his wartime correspondence with the family and friends of Vermont soldiers. In the nation's capital alone, Frank Holbrook had oversight of thousands of Vermont casualties distributed among more than 100 military hospitals.

Requests to the commissioner for transfers to Vermont hospitals competed in number with letters from worried friends and relatives pleading for information about a sick or wounded loved one. Most of the requests were both humble and stilted in their awkward attempt at formal military parlance; however, no matter the spelling, the wording, or the literacy level of the favorseeker, the unspoken bottom line remained consistent: Please, sir, send me home. One of the most endearing is a letter from a Sheldon soldier, Lewis Reyea of the 5th Vermont Volunteers, wounded in the fighting at the Battle of the Wilderness. Reyea wrote at a time when thousands of new casualties from Grant's Overland Campaign poured into the major cities lining the rail route north. Reyea must have known that the recent influx of wounded made time dear to the extremely busy man he solicited for help. It must have been frustrating to know that Commissioner Holbrook received hundreds of similar requests during times of active campaign; difficult, too, for the soldier to realize that a complete stranger held such power, could confer a personal favor of such consequence, that a simple "ok" scrawled by the commissioner upon his letter of request could profoundly affect the quality of his physical and mental well-being. From bed no.16, Wolfe Street Hospital, in Alexandria, Virginia, Lewis Reyea wrote: "Dear Sir, take opportunity to inform you I am able to be transefur to Vermont State At any, now. I belive you was over to the hospital week or two ago. you said whenever I was able to go Let you know, so I do so. I Like to be transefur to Burlington hospital . . . if it come handy . . . Please do the Best."¹²

If anything could persuade a reluctant writer to commit his or her thoughts to paper that impetus would be war's impact on the welfare of a child. Dan Johnson of Williston probably didn't write many letters, but in August 1864 he sent Commissioner Holbrook a heartfelt request that his son Nathan be transferred to a Vermont hospital. Nathan's malady, he wrote, was "infermation on the lungs."¹³

Occasionally worried constituents solicited a town or government official to commit the necessary words to paper. In June 1864 a town selectman intervened on behalf of the concerned father of William Mitchell, wounded in service with the 10th Vermont Regiment. Would Commissioner Holbrook see to it that young Mitchell either receives a furlough home to Pittsfield or is transferred to a hospital in his native

state? Although he was writing on behalf of the soldier's father, the selectman could not be restrained from qualifying the request by adding, "I understand that many have shot off their own fingers, if he is one of that kind keep him where he is & send him to the front."¹⁴

Sometimes requests for transfer to a Vermont hospital came from the pen of a sympathetic stranger, often a hospital attendant or nurse. In the summer of 1864, a military courier wrote Holbrook that a Miss Bostwick of Alexandria Hospital had charge of a Vermont soldier identified only by the Christian name, Loyal, who would certainly die if left there. The surgeon in charge was willing the soldier be transferred if someone could attend him on the journey north. The courier set forth a reasonable travel itinerary, volunteering to see Loyal to the train, and claiming that the station manager would provide the Vermonter transportation via sleeping car *if* (the emphasis is the writer's) the soldier "is not offensive from wound or disease," in which case he would have to make the journey home by hospital car.¹⁵ It is difficult to imagine having to be concerned with offending the sensibilities of the general public with the visual violence of war amid the bloody aftermath of Grant's Overland Campaign.

Vermont's hospital commissioners were overwhelmed at times by requests for information from concerned relatives and friends who had been otherwise unable to learn the fate of loved ones in the service. One example relates the story of a very worried father trying to learn the fate of his wounded son. The correspondence remains as compelling today as Commissioner Holbrook must have found it 140 years ago. In June of 1864, Reverend Bidwell of East Middlebury wrote that he had a son serving in the 5th Vermont Regiment who, so his comrades informed him, had been mortally wounded. A recently published list of casualties confirmed the report. Such was the full extent of his knowledge of the matter. Could Holbrook give him any further information, even if only whether Emery was living or dead? Perhaps not surprisingly, given the size of his jurisdiction, Holbrook was unable to locate the soldier and so informed the anxious father. Reverend Bidwell replied that since he last wrote he had received new information in the form of a letter from the chaplain of Harewood Hospital, northwest of the city. The chaplain wrote that Bidwell's son was there, that though he personally believed young Bidwell might get well, Emery himself claimed to be "feeling badly." Reverend Bidwell further informed Holbrook that he had sent his son two letters within the past five days but had had no response and he continued to hear rumors that his son was dead. Please, he implored the commissioner, ascertain the facts for an anxious parent: Did Emery receive his letters (if living)? How is he, and

how does he fare? “If I can get an expression of his (if living) through some one, I shall feel very much obliged.” At the bottom of this letter Holbrook made the following notation: “Telegraphed June 22. Saw your son today—comfortable—much improved. Letters sent you.” Nearly 140 years later Reverend Bidwell’s sigh of relief is still almost audible.¹⁶

Hospital commissioners were called upon for every kind of soldier’s aid imaginable, their capacity for kindness at times seemingly inexhaustible. George Sherman, formerly of the 11th Vermont Regiment/1st Heavy Artillery wrote to inform Commissioner Holbrook that he was becoming increasingly frustrated trying to collect two months pay due him for time served while a prisoner of war. Would Mr. Holbrook be so kind as to attend to the matter? And by the way, Sherman wrote, what would be the commissioner’s fee for assisting him? In reply, Holbrook penciled the following directives on Sherman’s letter “*No charge* [boldly underscored]. Send discharge and account of where he has been and sign blank.” Unfortunately, the latter directive, “sign blank,” apparently impelled poor George Sherman to write another letter a couple of weeks later reiterating an ageless frustration with the government’s penchant for complicated forms. “Yours with Blanks is Rec’d, &c. I don’t know how to fill them out So as to have them appear correct . . . I hardly understand them.” Then, as if detail would somehow compensate for his ignorance, he followed with a two-page catalog of facts bearing upon his claim for back pay. Commissioner Holbrook obviously got the point and probably felt that further correspondence with the frustrated veteran would simply waste more time, for the second letter bears his own penciled calculations of payment due. Within two months, George Sherman’s accounts were finally settled.¹⁷

Later in the war, Vermont’s hospital commissioners also assumed responsibility for attending to the formidable needs of returning prisoners of war. One of the more remarkable items in Holbrook’s correspondence is a letter he sent to Adjutant General Washburn in December 1864. After noting the enclosure of his regular report of hospital arrivals, releases, and transfers he added, “I now enclose duplicate of the tickets pinned to the clothing of Vermont Soldiers buried at Andersonville Ga.” That these small items somehow survived Andersonville, the Civil War, and the arsenal fire seems almost miraculous. Essentially they contain little more than name, rank, military unit, and grave number; it is left to the reader to imagine the compelling stories that concluded in these fragile and faded pieces of pale blue paper.¹⁸

The Vermont Military Records Project has also made available primary source material documenting the state’s response to the St. Albans

Raid in October 1864. Hundreds of telegrams, letters, and dispatches were sent and received as the alarm spread. Discrete and vigilant agents were hastily dispatched to posts throughout the state, particularly along the Canadian frontier and the towns bordering Lake Champlain, to keep watch for suspicious activity or persons. Rumors abounded as hundreds of excitable and not very well-informed citizens tried to assist state officials with their surveillance. A letter from a Mr. Richmond, officially appointed by the adjutant general to keep watch over the town of Woodstock, warned Washburn that exaggeration and what he termed “bugbear” stories abounded. The latest story, he wrote, reported that “*40 Robbers encamped on Hosea Bensons and Lockwoods Farms*” [emphasis in original]. With the voice of reason Richmond explained that the story was born when an unthinking Hosea Benson remarked that there could be any number of desperadoes secreted in the town’s plentiful sugarhouses and back barns. Benson mentioned that he himself had buildings where such outlaws might encamp for many days without fear of discovery. Apparently, within three days his remarks evolved into a rumor that meandered its way to Burlington. With tongue in cheek Richmond warned the adjutant general, whose home and office were both in Woodstock, “if rumors should enlarge as much in going to Montpelier as they do in traveling to our nearest neighboring villages I don’t think you will dare to come to Woodstock until peace is declared.”¹⁹

The alarm within its own borders provided Vermont’s dormant militia organization a powerful shot in the arm. The adjutant general had been attempting to direct official attention and state resources to beefing up home forces for some time, but Vermonters widely believed that all available manpower was currently being funneled into active U. S. service. However, in response to the St. Albans Raid provisional infantry and cavalry units sprang up in northern towns almost overnight. The 26th New York Cavalry, better known to Vermonters as the Frontier Cavalry, was the federal government’s official response to monitoring traffic across the Canadian border and to securing the communities in proximity to it. State agents were sent from town to town to oversee the raising and equipping of these provisional military units. Within the records of the adjutant general a great deal of correspondence in regard to these efforts has survived. It appears that most Vermont communities complied willingly and promptly in raising these temporary units, although apparently Derby Line was not moving quickly enough in mobilizing its home guard to suit state officials, and in November 1864, William Grout faced some unique difficulties attempting to mobilize the manpower of Island Pond. The customhouse there had recently

seized a rebel staff officer's uniform purported to be on its way from Halifax to Quebec. As a major station on the rail route running from the Atlantic to Canada, Grout felt that Island Pond might prove an important point for gaining information and recommended a detective system be established there. But as for raising a mounted force, the outlook was dismal. Island Pond's population consisted mainly of railroad employees who altogether could not muster more than half a dozen horses. As an alternative he thought perhaps an infantry guard might prove more practical; however, thirty antiquated French muskets represented the extent of the available small arms and, moreover, the residents had opted against organization, deciding instead, he wrote, to "resist each man on his own hook." Grout must have been sorely tempted to allow them to do just that, for in his letter to the adjutant general he tried to rationalize his growing frustration. The town of Brighton was situated in a densely wooded country with few, very well-defined approaches, and besides, he wrote with more than a little cynicism, "all there is here is in the interest of the Grand Trunk Railway, which we all know is a British concern"²⁰

In July of 1866, the adjutant general sent letters to all of Vermont's former regimental commanders requesting a list of engagements in which their particular units took part. The letter returned by Edward Hastings Ripley, commander of the 9th Vermont Regiment, along with the requested listing, is thoughtful, almost melancholy, in tone. Ripley wrote, "The regrets that I often used to feel struggling with the pride I felt in looking at the numerical & physical strength of the Regt. are felt now oftener and deeper than ever, that the 9th's name is not more intricately woven into the historic pages of the past 4 years by association with the names of some of our great successes. The Regt has passed away, & with it most probably will pass away its ephemeral brilliancy & perfection, but not so those upon whose colors are placed such memorializing names as cover the flags of the old Brigade. The contrast now is without relief a sad one, as though between mortality and immortality. And yet there is a satisfaction, a deep one that I feel, that in the records of your office the testimony is borne & *you* cannot forget that the 9th strove to do its whole duty."²¹

"In the records of your office the testimony is borne." Those words must have haunted Adjutant General Peter Washburn, for a few months later he again reminded the General Assembly: "These [military] records and files are of inestimable value to the State, to every officer and soldier from the State, and to the representatives of those who have died in the service, as well as to the future historian. If destroyed, they could not be replaced; and the proper measures to be adopted for

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A hand lettered roster created in 1843, recording the service of Vermont troops during the American Revolution, damaged in the arsenal fire of 1945. Photo by the author.

their care and preservation require serious attention. . . . If, as has been the custom hitherto, the place of their location shall continue to be the place of residence of the Adjutant and Inspector General, and change with each successive change in the office, not only is the risk of their destruction by fire, or other casualty greatly increased, but they will in time become dilapidated, scattered and lost, and the archives of the State will be as destitute of records pertaining to the war of 1861, as they now are of records of the war of 1812 and of the Revolutionary war."²² General Washburn was correct. Less than one carton of material documenting Vermont's part in the War of 1812 and very little more than that for the American Revolution has survived in the archive. Historians must be grateful that a considerable portion of the Civil War archive survived its ordeal by fire. But Vermonters must also always be left to wonder what other secrets and stories must have lain in ashes among the rubble in 1945.

Cataloging information: All citations are from the Records of the Adjutant and Inspector General, 1775–1919, microfilm record series PRA 364, 141 reels of microfilm. Held by the Public Records Division of the Department of Buildings and General Services, Middlesex, Vt. The finding aid is available online at http://www.bgs.state.vt.us/gsc/pubrec/referen/finding_aid.htm

NOTES

¹ *Report of the Adjutant & Inspector General of the State of Vermont, from Oct. 1, 1864, to Oct. 1, 1865* (Montpelier: Walton's Steam Printing Establishment, 1865), 124–125.

² *Report of the Adjutant & Inspector General of the State of Vermont, from October 1, 1863, to October 1, 1864* (Montpelier: Walton's Steam Press, 1864), 105.

³ Homer Stoughton's account, 27 January 1891, Francis Randall's account, 13 July 1869, and Merritt Barber's account, 4 November 1892, all on reel F26101. The 9th Vermont testimony, including letter of Joel Baker, 11 February 1893, on reel F26151.

⁴ 14th Regiment Vermont Volunteer Infantry, original enlistment rolls including guardian consents, reel F26079.

⁵ Letter, 16 December 1863. 17th Regiment Vermont Volunteer Infantry, correspondence, on reel F26085.

⁶ 1st Battery, Vermont Light Artillery, medical inspection roll, c. February 1862, and physical examination form for P. LaClair, 17 January 1862, on reel F26090.

⁷ 10th Regiment Vermont Volunteer Infantry, descriptive rolls, Company D, 7 August 1862, reel F26068.

⁸ Letter of Captain Seaton, 25 February 1863. Company F, 1st United States Sharpshooters, correspondence, on reel F26087.

⁹ Letter of Henry Dutton, 29 December 1864. 8th Regiment Vermont Volunteer Infantry, correspondence, reel F26052.

¹⁰ Letter of B. N. Hyde, 20 September 1862. 3rd Regiment Vermont Volunteer Infantry, correspondence, reel F26019.

¹¹ Letter of W. Henry, 27 April 1864. 10th Regiment Vermont Volunteer Infantry, correspondence, reel F26066.

¹² Letter of Lewis Reyee, 3 July [1864]. Hospital records, correspondence of F. Holbrook, reel F26102.

¹³ Letter of Dan Johnson, 2 August 1864. Hospital records, correspondence of F. Holbrook, reel F26102.

¹⁴ Letter of A. Keith regarding W. Mitchell, 16 June 1864. Hospital records, correspondence of F. Holbrook, reel F26102.

¹⁵ Letter of A. Trigo, 24 June 1864. Hospital records, correspondence of F. Holbrook, reel F26102.

¹⁶ Letters of Rev. S. Bidwell, 2 and 20 June 1864. Hospital records, correspondence of F. Holbrook, reel F26102. Emery Bidwell's luck did not improve. After recovering from his wounding at the Battle of the Wilderness, Bidwell rejoined his regiment. He was captured by Confederate guerillas on 7 October 1864 while on picket duty and hanged.

¹⁷ Letters of George Sherman, 10 and 24 July 1865. Hospital records, correspondence of F. Holbrook, reel F26103.

¹⁸ Letter of F. Holbrook containing Andersonville clothing tags, 5 December 1864. Hospital records, hospital reports, reel F26104.

¹⁹ Letter of O. Richmond, 11 November 1864. Correspondence relating to the St. Albans Raid, reel F26101.

²⁰ Letter from W. Grout, 2 November 1864. Correspondence relating to the St. Albans Raid, reel F26100.

²¹ Letter of Edward H. Ripley, 9 July 1866. 9th Regiment Vermont Volunteer Infantry, general correspondence, reel F26058.

²² *Report of the Adjutant & Inspector General of the State of Vermont, from Oct. 1, 1865, to Oct. 1, 1866* (Montpelier: Walton's Steam Printing Establishment, 1866), 18–19.