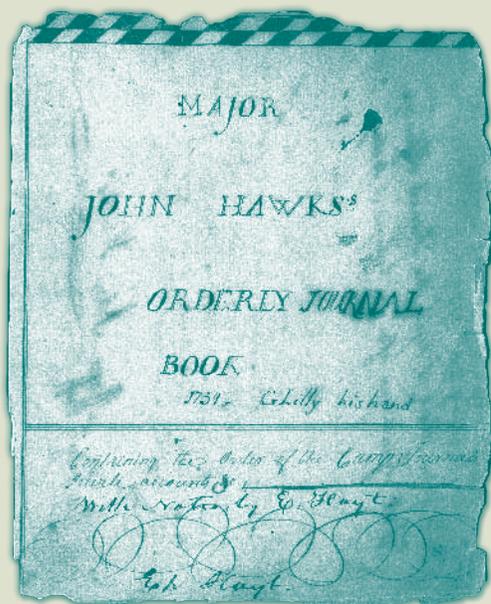


VERMONT HISTORY



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The Journal of the Vermont Historical Society

About the Cover Illustrations

Odyssey of an Early Manuscript

One of the earliest manuscripts in the collections of the Vermont Historical Society, the orderly book and journal of Major John Hawks, written in the years 1759-1760, has been returned to the Society after an odyssey of 111 years. Its story is one of veneration of the country's colonial era, Vermont historical pride, possessiveness by a family member and collector, and thorough detective work by a modern museum professional.

The leather-bound journal of Major John Hawks contains the regimental orders issued to him during the period May 9, 1759, through September 8, 1760, as well as "after orders."¹ Many of the orders were issued at Half Way Brook in the town of Queensbury, New York, half-way between Fort Edward and Lake George. Others were issued at Crown Point, New York. It is, as Rev. George B. Spalding, one of its early owners, put it, "A record of the military operations which took place in the Province of New York in the successful campaign of General Jeffrey Amherst against Ticonderoga and Crown Point, in 1759."² The orderly book is a relic of America's colonial past, written by a Massachusetts man serving in the king's army who never fought in the territory that would become Vermont.

In the 1840s the journal belonged to military historian General Ephras Hoyt (1765-1850) of Deerfield, Massachusetts, Major Hawks's hometown, who wrote explanatory notes on the pages of the manuscript volume. Rev. Spalding, a native Vermonter, acquired it in 1865 while he was pastor of the North Church in Hartford, Connecticut. He gave it to the Vermont Historical Society in 1868. Although the volume is only tangentially related to Vermont history, it was accepted into the collections with great fanfare by Pliny H. White, historian and president of the Vermont Historical Society at that time, who called the manuscript "one of the most valuable donations to the Vermont Historical Society during the current year."³

The valuable gift came during a period when the Society's leaders were trying to secure an historical reputation for the state at the same time as its population was declining. Writing in the *Vermont Freeman* newspaper, White points to Spalding's generosity as an example that others should follow: "It were a good thing if other sons of Vermont, who have left the State of their nativity, would emulate this good example, and would show by similar thoughtful acts, that they do not forget the mother who bore them."⁴

The volume was held in such high regard that in 1901 it was loaned by the Vermont Historical Society to the Society of Colonial Wars of the State of New York so that a printed version could be published. The book was published in 1911. The VHS purchased a copy from the publisher at the end of 1929 for \$1.00. The first introductory piece in the published volume, a note by Spalding, states that the original is "now the property of the Vermont Historical Society."⁵

Alas, the original manuscript never made its way back to the Vermont Historical Society. In February 1932, twenty years after the manuscript had left Montpelier, a librarian at the VHS pasted a typewritten note inside the published version of the orderly book, apparently at the request of Sara Hawks Huling, daughter of William E. Hawks of Bennington, Vermont, who was looking for her ancestor's manuscript. The note said, in part, "Through negligence this volume was never returned and all trace of it has vanished, a very regrettable incident as the manuscript is priceless."⁶

Unbeknownst to the Vermont Historical Society or Mrs. Huling, the manuscript was at that time in the possession of Mrs. Huling's brother, George M. Hawks, and had been since 1911. Memos and letters in the files of the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS), obtained by the Bennington Museum in 2012, reveal that in 1930, Edward Brooks, an amateur historian and wealthy Bostonian, was writing a biography of Major Hawks. Brooks contacted George M. Hawks in Bennington, discovered that he had the original manuscript, and believing that the manuscript was at the VHS, asked how Mr. Hawks got it. George Hawks claimed that it came to him through his father, William, who had died in 1911, coincidentally the same year the Society of Colonial Wars of the State of New York published the Hawks *Orderly Book and Journal*.

Brooks examined the original manuscript on two occasions. He first saw it on July 7, 1931, during a visit with George Hawks in Bennington, and wrote in a memo to the file at the MHS, "While examining it in Bennington I noticed on the inside back cover in the upper left hand

corner a note written by George B. Spalding, who found the Journal, that he had presented it to the Vermont Historical Society.”⁷

Two months later, the orderly book was sent to Boston to be photocopied and Brooks examined it for a second time at the Massachusetts Historical Society. In the same file memo Brooks wrote, “On examining the inside back cover I noted that the lines written by Mr. Spalding had been erased by some chemical. Some of the words however could be seen with the aid of a strong glass.” And then the book was returned to George M. Hawks. A handwritten note from Julius H. Tuttle, librarian of the Massachusetts Historical Society, dated October 2, 1931, and still with the orderly book, states that “I have had the pages photostated, and am returning it, herewith, to you.” He thanks Mr. Hawks “for the kind permission to have this done.”⁸ In September of that year, Hawks wrote again to Brooks, telling him, “If you desire, I have no objections to your mentioning the fact in your biography that this Journal is now in my possession.”⁹

On the other hand, George Hawks evidently understood that the manuscript volume belonged to the Vermont Historical Society, because he possessed the 1868 clipping from the *Vermont Freeman* in which Pliny White reported the gift of the book to the Society. Hawks pasted the clipping to his letterhead and wrote on the bottom, “This book should be sent to the Vermont Historical Society. G. M. Hawks.” However, the Hawks orderly book remained in the possession of the Hawks family until it was given to the Bennington Museum, probably in 1956, by George Hawks’s son, Breard, along with other Hawks family materials. Allen D. Hill, librarian at the Bennington Museum, noticed the valuable manuscript and placed it in the museum’s safe, where it remained until 2011.

In that year, Bennington Museum Collections Manager Callie Stewart was working through some collections backlogs and discovered the orderly book. She noticed the Pliny White clipping dated 1868 and contacted the Vermont Historical Society to ask about the manuscript’s provenance. She also contacted the Massachusetts Historical Society, which still had a photostat copy of the orderly book, and discovered the correspondence that had taken place in 1931 between Edward Brooks and George Hawks. Through a series of exchanges over the next year the staffs of the Bennington Museum and the Vermont Historical Society determined that the manuscript belonged at the VHS and it was returned to the Society on October 26, 2012, where it now resides.

PAUL A. CARNAHAN, *Librarian*
Vermont Historical Society

NOTES

¹ It appears that “after order” may have been a term of Hawks’s own invention. The Preface says, “The daily order appears at the head of each paragraph, and in case of the issue of a second order on any day it was headed as an AFTER ORDER” (emphasis in the original).

² *Orderly Book and Journal of Major John Hawks on the Ticonderoga-Crown Point Campaign, Under Jeffrey Amherst, 1759-1760* (New York: Society of Colonial Wars in the State of New York, 1911), v.

³ Pliny H. White, “Hawks Orderly Book,” May 30, 1868, newspaper clipping on Geo. M. Hawks letterhead, Vermont Historical Society, MSB-99.

⁴ White, “Hawks Orderly Book.”

⁵ *Orderly Book*, v.

⁶ VHS copy of *Orderly Book*. Mrs. Huling or the librarian also stated that the manuscript had been donated to the Vermont Historical Society by Mrs. Huling’s father, William E. Hawks of Bennington. Records do not support this assertion.

⁷ Massachusetts Historical Society, MSN-1378, John Hawks Papers.

⁸ Julius H. Tuttle to George M. Hawks, October 2, 1931, Vermont Historical Society, MSB-99

⁹ Massachusetts Historical Society, MSN-1378, John Hawks Papers.

Front cover: Major John Hawks’s Orderly Journal, 1759-1760 cover page.

Back cover: Hawks’s Journal, page 2.

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