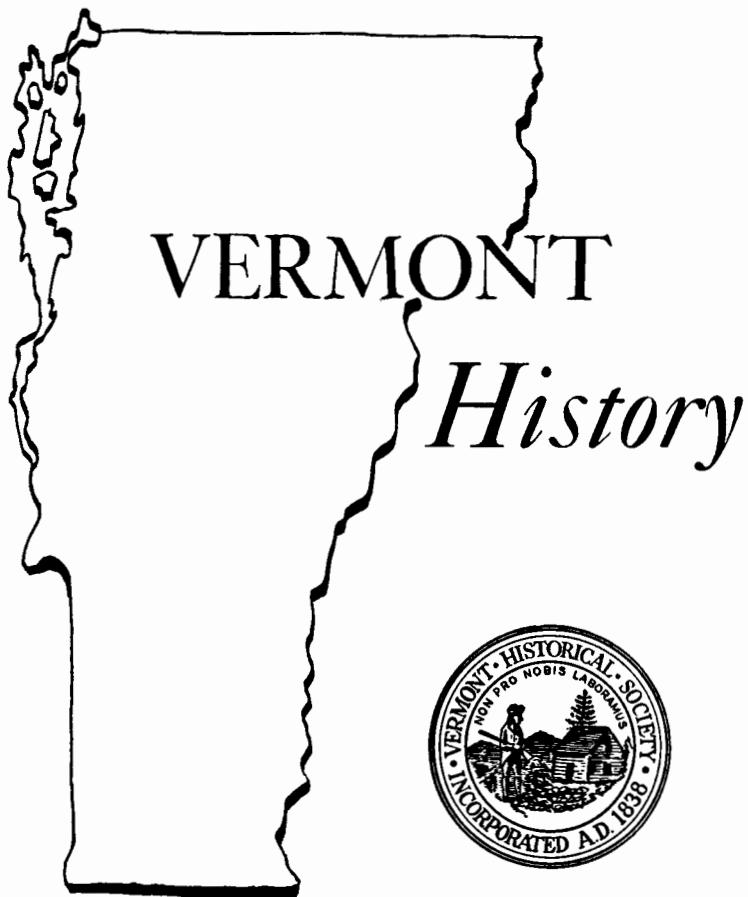


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# A New York Doctor Recalls Vermont: The Memoirs of Calvin Skinner

*Edited by CHARLES T. MORRISSEY*

*In 1893, Calvin Skinner, retired surgeon, postmaster, and active public citizen, finished writing the story of his life as a gift to his family. Skinner was born in Royalton, Vermont, in 1818, son of a farmer and seventh of ten children. His farm boyhood was unremarkable for its day, but hindsight gave him the wisdom at 75 to record such events of lasting interest as Lafayette's visit and the reenactment of the Royalton Raid.*

*Skinner obtained his education at the University of Vermont and at the Dartmouth College Medical School, and he set up his practice in Rochester, Vermont. That post he reluctantly left to establish himself in Malone, New York, "because fees for professional services were only about one-third as much as those of the present day," he wrote in 1893, and he could not make an adequate living in Rochester. Yet he kept his ties with Vermont throughout his adult life.*

*In 1860 he attended the Republican National Convention in Chicago which nominated Abraham Lincoln for the Presidency. During the Civil War he served as a surgeon in the Union Army, and afterwards was a good friend of William Wheeler, Vice President of the United States when Rutherford Hayes was President. Best of all, he wrote about his memories with style and vigor.*

*His handwritten memoirs filled a book of 244 pages, and he completed it in time to present to his wife shortly before her death in 1893. The indefatigable doctor then set out to make a copy for each of his six living children. Only one of these books is known to have been completed before his death in 1903, and this copy was recently presented to the Vermont Historical Society by Dr. Skinner's great-granddaughters, the Misses Eleanor and Ruth Jones of Malone, New York.*

*Below are excerpts from Dr. Skinner's memoirs, with the original spellings and expressions. The complete handwritten version may be consulted in the library of the Vermont Historical Society.*

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If the old family Bible gives a correct record, I was born in Royalton, Vermont, in the little cottage near the bridge that crossed White River in the village, May 29th, 1818. It was in this cottage that all my

brothers and sisters were born, except brother Richard, who was born after we moved to the farm about one mile from the village.

I have no distinct recollection of the event and can only give the description given by Sister Lucretia from her standpoint of my personal appearance upon the day of my birth: She said I was "a great dough-faced, flaxen-haired squealing baby." I have no disposition to dispute Sister's opinion of my personal appearance and irritable disposition, for I am confident I should find my mother and several other members of our family, coinciding with her estimate of these characteristics of my personality.

In 1823, Father exchanged his village property with Mr. Partridge, a farmer and shoemaker, who owned several acres of land laying contiguous to the old farm upon which there was a small dwelling house and barn. Into this house we moved, and being of small dimension and the family quite large, one would be reminded of a swarm of bees in a contracted hive. But we were all happy that Father could be brought so near his daily labor upon the farm, and was in a position to put the older children at work to assist not only himself, but mother also, in household affairs. It could not be expected that, up to this time, I could make much show in the world, for I was still the same flaxen-haired, troublesome child, and my only avocation was to make my mother all the care and trouble I could and moreover, to annoy and vex my older sisters who were called upon to watch and care for me, for which annoyance and trouble I never received *one particle of credit!*

Up to this time or period of my life, I do not remember of a single thing or circumstance that transpired out of which I could relate anything of interest of sufficient importance to give to the world. But about this time I was made a small witness, yea an actor, to scenes and events that made an impression upon my mind that neither time nor space could ever wipe out.

In 1824, General Lafayette was invited by Congress to visit the United States. He accepted the invitation and landed in New York City August 15th, 1824. He was received everywhere with the utmost demonstration of popular enthusiasm; and his progress through the country resembled a continuous triumphal procession. He visited in succession each of the twenty-four States and all the principal cities in the same. In passing through Vermont, he fortunately took in Royalton on his way to Montpelier. Although but six years of age, I remember the whole transactions of that eventful day as if it were but yesterday.

A day or so before Lafayette reached Royalton, a general notice was sent abroad by Uncle Oel Billings, who was chosen to act as the

marshal of the day. He succeeded in gathering together a small company of Revolutionary veterans, perhaps thirty or more, from towns around that region, and sufficient number of citizens, great and small, to make the village of Royalton look as if it was enjoying a gala day.

The veterans came armed with their old flintlock muskets, and the citizens dressed in their best attire, which in those days was extremely plain and unostentatious. The village was decorated with all the flags and bunting that the times would afford. I have also the impression that the old Militia, (or as it was then called "Floodwood" Co.), with their drum corps, consisting of two bass and two tenor drums and perhaps a couple of fifers to do the blowing. This kind of music was exceedingly appropriate for such an occasion, besides, it was all to be had in those days.

Among the list of veterans gathered together for that occasion was Old Pigeon Dewey, a little shrivelled up scarecrow looking man in personal appearance. He lived opposite the Skinner homestead, across White River. Report says that he earned his title of "Pigeon" on account of his living three days on the broth of a single pigeon. Some credence was given to this report from the fact of the old man's niggardly and miserly habits. I must confess we all felt an abiding hatred and disgust toward the old antedeluvian on account of these characteristic habits.

I had my risibles greatly excited when I beheld his peculiar bombastic appearance at the Review which took place later in the day.

General Lafayette came into town by way of Woodstock, accompanied by his son and a retinue of State officials. He was escorted to the Smith Hotel, the only hotel in the village, and went immediately to his quarters. After dinner a reception was given in the parlor. I, of course, was not old enough to hear or to learn whether any speeches were made, but presume there were, as the General was accompanied by some of the most intelligent and distinguished men in the State of Vermont.

After the reception, the veterans having been formed into line, passed the General in single file; each soldier as he came opposite the stand discharged his old flint-lock musket in the air, as the customary salute, and passed on. Most of the old muskets responded, but a few did not, as when old Pigeon Dewey with a ridiculous, bombastic stride, putting on the air of one who feels as if my musket put an end to all of the "Redcoats" in the British Army, in passing the salute, pointed his musket toward Heaven, pulled the trigger, and behold, the poor old thing only flashed in the pan and he was compelled to

pass on, with his feathers somewhat limped. I was just old enough to enjoy the ridiculous farce, and laughed until my sides were sore at the thought of his magnificent failure.

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The review being ended, Genl. Lafayette made immediate preparations to proceed upon his journey toward Montpelier. The Marshal formed two lines on each side of the road, first came veterans and militia, and then citizens and last, children, great and small. These lines reached nearly to the house of Mr. Barrett. As I was among the youngest and smallest, my position was quite near the end of the line. Genl. Lafayette entered his barouche, and standing in the same, passed between the two lines, with chapeau in hand, bowing first upon one side and then the other, in true Parisian style. I shall never forget my impression, as he turned to bow to my side, I being nearly to the end of the line imagined that the last bow was intended for me personally. At the conclusion of the exercises, I returned to my home and related my joy at the discomforture of Old Pigeon, and his failure to discharge his musket, and the pleasure I felt at receiving a bow from Genl. Lafayette intended solely for my personal benefit. The whole transaction was given in boyish language, with perhaps a sprinkling of the Billings coloring, enough to make it appear ludicrous, and created a great laugh with Mother and my Sisters; still Mother expressed great pity and sympathy at Old Pigeon's discomforture. Your mother informs me that Genl. Lafayette in passing through Randolph stopped at her Father's hotel. While there the General spied Sister Hannah, then a little tot, but very pretty, running around the house. He took her up and played with her quite a time. Before he left he drew from his pocket a miniature likeness of himself, painted upon ivory, and gave to her, accompanied by a kiss and a farewell. This, of course, was a highly prized treasure, but some contemptable thief, knowing its value, slipped into the house, stole the prize and it could never be found afterward.

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The life of the farmer is somewhat monotonous, it is a daily routine of labors, year in and year out; and is only varied by the different kinds of labor brought about by the change of the seasons, as winter and summer. Of course the boys of the family are brought into the same line of action, and if they had a desire to render assistance to Father, must trudge on in the same channel while they remain at the homestead, or until they go out into the world to act for themselves. It

was in this way that we were kept closely confined to the duties of the farm, and it could not be expected that we could reach the improvement in manner or speech like those that have little else to do. One thing, Father and Mother were deserving of great praise, in that their children should have a thorough education, first and foremost, and they gave us every opportunity that their means and loss of labor upon the farm would admit. The result is, we all received a good practical education in the best schools of those days, and as far as book knowledge is concerned, were well prepared intellectually for a performance of all the duties of active life. The opportunities of receiving or procuring a good thorough education in Royalton, was always of high order. The Academy was one of the oldest, and considered one of the best in the State, and from it all my Brothers and Sisters were graduated. The only one of the family that received any educational advantages outside of this Institution, was myself.

Our dear parents ever instilled into our minds, both by example and precept, the necessity of living lives of honesty, sobriety and Christian forbearance. In the matter of temperance the whole family set a worthy example to the world, for neither Father or any of the family drank spirituous liquors, or made use of tobacco in any form, although Brother William kept and dealt in wines in his store. I am confident that not one of the boys could tell by taste or smell one kind of liquor from another (with the exception of myself, perhaps).

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During the years of my childhood, up to the time I commenced preparing for the profession of medicine, I spent the days in about the same manner that most boys do, namely, in fun and frolic, but very little in hard work. I remember that I had the reputation of being at enmity with work, although I could never be called a slattern. I was extremely fond of cutting up sly and funny capers and it required the utmost vigilance of my dear Father to keep me in line. If perchance the knowledge of my slyness came to his ears, I knew just what to expect, *viz.* the broad of his hand upon my posterail extremity. My good Mother saved me from many deserved castigations, by pleading youth and thoughtlessness upon my part, and perhaps many of these pleadings were more successful than the merits of the case deserved. I was fond of play and sports and spent many an hour playing soldier with Grandfather's old Revolutionary musket and powder horn, (now hanging in our dining room). For several years I spent most of the year at school, except during the summer months, when I was compelled to as-

sist upon the farm even up to the age of eighteen. Father was an early riser, and tried hard to educate his boys to this habit, but woefully failed, for we were all constitutional sleepers. Father was in the habit of dividing the time of driving the cows to pasture during the summer months, among the younger boys, one to drive one month or so, and then change. He was in the habit of coming to the foot of the stairway, after having, with the help of the hired men, finished the cow milking, and cry out in positive tones: "Lewis, Calvin, Martin, Richard—come get up, the cows are ready." If we failed to respond to the first call, we knew the consequences, for he never called but once. I remember one morning Father made a special call for "Calvin, the cows are ready, get right up." I, of course, drowsily answered, Yes Sir, but before he reached the outer door I was fast in the arms of Morpheus and continued to sleep, until aroused by the tramp of Father's big boots, ascending the back stairway. In a moment I leaped out of bed, caught my pants and little jacket in my arms, ran down the front stairs, slipped on my pants in the hall, and jacket on my way to the barn; and when Father made his appearance I was driving the cows down the lane screaming to the top of my voice "Whey! get out of this you *lazy beasts*." There was another day in my early life, the events of which I have a distinct recollection, and in carrying out the ceremonies of the day I was a small participator, although but twelve years of age.

The fiftieth anniversary of the burning of Royalton by the Indians was the occasion to which I refer. This tragic event took place Oct. 16 1780. A band of Caghawagua Indians led by some British white spies, came out of Canada through the northern and eastern part of Vermont, crossed over through Strafford, following down the branch that empties into White River opposite South Royalton. The object of this visit was, I have no doubt, to pillage and destroy what property they could find, burning dwellings, and killing several of the inhabitants. I surmise that the chief object of this raid was to take as many prisoners as they could find, and drive them back into Canada. As they came down the Branch they crossed the Kent Ford at South Royalton. On their way down from Tunbridge they took several prisoners and killed one or two, pillaged and burned some dwellings and barns. Many heads of families, having learned of their approach, flew to the forests, taking as many members of their families as they could gather together. One poor mother, Mrs. Hedges living upon the Branch road, had a family of two small children, her husband having previously fled to the woods. She and her children were taken prisoners, the house pillaged and destroyed, and they being compelled by threats to march

on with the band, other prisoners with them. Arriving at Kent's Ford, the water being somewhat high and rapid, Mrs. Hennes was driven to take the smaller child upon her back and carry them over White River. This took some time and the Indians were very cross and insolent. After reaching the south side Mrs. Hennes began to plead with the savages to release her poor children, telling them that her children were small and feeble and unable to travel so far; and that they would be only a hindrance and burden to them. She pleaded with all of the Mother's earnestness and tearful sincerity, the force of which so worked upon the sympathies of their savage natures that they concluded to release Mrs. Hennes and the little children, together with several smaller ones; in fact, she drew out enough of their finer feelings so that, out of pity, they helped her to take her little ones back over the ford, and thus escaped certain death. The Savages did not go very much further down White River, but turned their course up the stream. On reaching Royalton village, they burned what few dwellings that were found there and took several prisoners, and went on their way toward Canada. I think twenty-six dwellings and barns were burned, few it is true, but pretty much all that was to be found in those days in that locality. I have often heard Capt. Garner Rix tell of his capture at that time, together with others, and of being forcibly taken to Montreal and imprisoned there until exchanged, a year or more afterward. Mr. Rix says that the amount of suffering and deprivations the prisoners had to endure, both upon the journey and in the prison, was intolerable; one of the prisoners having died while confined there. Although the burning of Royalton may seem a small thing in these days, to the inhabitants of that day, it was a sad event. The burning of Royalton was an event that gave the town a place in early history, and which the sons and daughters of the settlers have ever kept in mindful remembrance.

It was the fiftieth anniversary of this event which occurred in Royalton Oct. 16th, 1830, in which I was a small participator, and witness, of which I have a vivid recollection. The day was one of those bright and pleasant days of the early fall, and of course, large crowds were gathered to honor the occasion. In order to make this semicentennial celebration represent as nearly as possible the original event, a company of young men, mostly students of the Academy, dressed themselves in what they thought to be like the Indian garb, painted and feathered with turkey plumage; carrying wooden tomahawks and scalping knives hanging in their counterfeit wampum belts. These false Indians were the attraction of the day. At the same time the "Flood Wood" company

was called out to skirmish with the Indians. This company was under the command of Daniel Lyman. I think the day was opened by a field-piece brought up from Woodstock. An oration was delivered by Nathaniel Sprague, the Preceptor of the Academy, in the old Congregational Meeting House. The people assembled in large numbers on the little hill in front of the Academy green, the militia forming a line to protect them. Just back of the Old Church, under the pinnacle, and in full view of the spectators, the mock Indians had formed their camp; then they ostensibly burned a prisoner, who was concealed under a heap of straw, but who had previously crawled out unseen by the observers in the village. The second Burning of Royalton was simply the destruction of a small shanty located upon the green, near the dwelling of Bela Hall. In this shanty were placed, (if I recollect), myself, D. C. Denison and Young Bowman, to be scalped and murdered, "a la mode" Indian fashion, when the savages came into town. I remember well my impressions as these counterfeit fellows came leaping up the turnpike past Aunt Washburn's, at every jump crying "Whoop! Whoop! Whoop!" most vociferously. Their actions were more like howling Dervishes than Indians. I presume that not more than two or three of the company had ever seen a real Indian. I remember distinctly who scalped Denison and myself, C. G. Eastman, the Vermont Poet, of whom I shall speak more particularly hereafter. About this time the Old Militia came up and began to bang lustily at these mock Indians, with their old flint lock muskets, and of course they soon scattered, one catching up a pig which he carried away squealing lustily. Another caught a rooster which went away squawking to his heart's content. Of course the Indians were driven from the village, and stole all of the pies, and other eatables they could lay their hands upon. I remember they entered Mother Blodgett's hotel kitchen, stole from the oven a good supply of hot pumpkin pies which she had baked for the occasion, and moreover almost frightened to death a poor little negro girl servant who was at the house. The day passed off to the edification and enjoyment of all beholders.

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The years between 1830 and 1837 passed without leaving the impression of any great or interesting event fixed upon my memory. During this interim, my time was spent in pursuit of my studies, preparatory to entering college. But the summer season my time and labors were given in assisting my Father upon the farm, and the winter in

keeping school, for which I had no great love. In speaking of Deacon Garner Rix who was taken by the Indians, but who afterward returned and lived in Royalton, I am reminded of a laughable incident which Mother used to relate for our edification.

Mr. and Mrs. Rix were very intimate friends of Father and Mother and were in the habit of spending considerable time at each others houses, especially to exchange evening visits in which they spent a social hour in jovial conversation, for Mother and Mrs. Rix were both glib talkers. On one occasion Mr. and Mrs. Rix came over to make their evening's visit with Father and Mother, a big fire was blazing in the broad fireplace, a tallow dip or so was burning upon the stand, a plate of twisted doughnuts and cheese and perhaps apples and cider upon the table. After all were seated around the table and had partaken of Mother's hospitality, the Mothers would ply themselves to their knitting work and enter into chatty conversation with a zest that must have charmed their husbands. Father and Mr. Rix being perhaps weary with their days labor, would spend a little time in talking over the matters of their farms. But this conversation did not continue very long before each, sitting upright in their chairs would drop into a deep sleep, and dose, and snore to their hearts content, but this did not interfere with the good little Mother's conversation. When it came time for the party to break up, Mrs. Rix would call out "Come Father ain't it about time to go home." At this salutation both sleepers would arouse, rub their half open eyelids, gape once or twice, and then prepare to depart. Before leaving Mrs. Rix would turn to Father and say "Well Uncle Calvin we have spent a very pleasant evening now! Suppose you come over and sleep with me some evening." This remark would cause a great laugh with the chatty little women, and end in a promise to return the visit at the first convenient season.

In the fall of 1837 Dudley C. Denison and myself entered the University of Vermont at Burlington. Entering at the same time and in the same class were several young men who in after years became distinguished, and filled high positions in the State and Nation. Among the number was Henry J. Raymond, who later on was the publisher, proprietor, and editor of the New York Times. Also Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New York. I spent many social hours with him while at Burlington. James Spaulding, a happy good fellow, later became editor of the N.Y. Express. Henry and Mathew Hale, who were afterward members of the Congress and prominent lawyers; Richard Dana of Boston, and several others who occupied distinguished positions in the States to which they belonged. I think all of them have

gone to their last resting place long since, but they left a record, and name, that will go down to later ages of our country's history.

I remained in college about ten months, then, on account of sickness, was compelled to leave. This illness confined me at home several months, and when at last I did recover, I was advised by Dr. Denison, my brother-in-law, to take up the study of medicine, into whose office I immediately entered. I spent three years under his instruction, and passed much of the time in Sister Eliza's family and in the enjoyment of the companionship of her dear children, who drew out my love and attachment, next to that of my own children. It was in the year 1838 that I commenced the study of medicine, and during the three years that followed I attended two courses of lectures at Woodstock, Vt., and two at Dartmouth Medical College at Hanover, N.H. It was from this Institution that I took my medicine degree in Nov., 1841. You will find the names of Dixi Crosby and Oliver Wendell Holmes inscribed thereon.

I conceived the idea that to add to my medical and surgical education a course of lectures in New York would be of great benefit in my future professional life. I therefore went immediately to New York and entered for a course at the old College of Physicians and Surgeons, then on Crosby St., and also became a pupil in the Eye and Ear Infirmary, the Obstetrical Hospital, and whatever other departments from which I could draw medical instruction. From these sources, I am confident, I gained much professional knowledge from which I attained much of the success which has followed me in my future practice of medicine and surgery.

In journeying to New York I went by way of Concord, N.H., and it was here that your Mother and myself entered into the matrimonial engagement which, I am happy to say, lasted to the end of our lives, and from which neither ever had any desire to be separated, for it was mutual. I also took in, at that time, Boston, Springfield, and Hartford, Conn. My journey from Springfield to Hartford was made by stage, for it was before the day of railroads on that route.

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From Hartford to New York I rode upon the old boat, The City of Hartford, down the Connecticut River, and through The Sound. Having spent six months in New York, I returned to Royalton, and put myself into a position to enter into the active duties of my profession. I was advised by old Dr. Denison to go to Rochester, Vt., and enter into partnership with Dr. Huntington, and I accepted his advice. Before

going up to Rochester I found it necessary to purchase a horse, which I did, and gave my personal note for the same. Brother William gave me my saddle bags, saddle, and bridle. I did not think it best to ask my Father for further assistance, for I had drawn upon him previously all I thought I was entitled to. Mounting my steed and taking what personal property I possessed, I went on my way. I spent a few months with Dr. Huntington and his family, and was always pleased with the courteous manner he treated me. The doctor was a very successful and intelligent professional man, and from him I drew much valuable instruction and praiseworthy advice. I remember on one occasion the Doctor sent me several miles in the country to visit a bedridden old maid. He was in the habit of soothing her many complaints, more by quieting advice, rather than making her stomach an apothecary shop. But this time I was to try my luck; I, of course, found the old maid in bed, and the moment I entered the room she began to fill the young doctor's ears full of her complaints; not an organ in her body that was not overloaded with disease and putrifying sores. I listened with all of the patience of a profound medical man—and then set myself about the task of administering to each and every complaint, in fact filled her full of medicine, to my great satisfaction; and returned home. At evening the Doctor came into the office, and walking back and forth as usual, in his peculiar, stately manner, turned toward me and inquired, "Well, Dr. Skinner, how is our patient up the Branch?" I replied—"Well, I think she is doing well enough." "Did you give her any medicine?" And of course I told him how bountifully I had dosed her. After turning around very abruptly, he said, "You are a very foolish fellow." He, perceiving that I was greatly nettled, said, "Now, Dr. Skinner, I am an old physician and can safely give you some sage advice; when you visit a patient that he or she is doing well enough, don't dose them! Don't dose them! Nor fill their stomachs full of medicine, but let nature do the work." This advice, although a little hard upon the young physician, did more good than the reading of half the books in my library, this sensible practice which I have endeavored to follow through my whole professional life. I remained with Dr. Huntington until the early spring of 1842, when I received a letter from Daniel N. Huntington of Malone (New York), inviting me to come to Malone, and informing me of the death of Dr. Conant, a most excellent physician residing there. His many friends were very anxious to find some physician who could satisfactorily take his place,—and as far as in me lay, I endeavored to fill the requirements to the full extent of my ability.

I would here state that one great reason for my leaving Rochester was that it was a very small place, and the fees for professional services were only about one-third as much as those of the present day. Of course it was almost impossible for the partners to make more than an ordinary living in that condition of affairs; still, I think it was a great benefit to me to reap the full measure of Dr. Huntington's long experience. About all I saved from my few months earnings was just about enough to pay my running expenses, and to take up the note I had previously given for my horse. After going home to put myself in readiness for my departure, and borrowing seventy-five dollars of a neighbor, he giving me seventy and reserving five dollars as bonus—I giving my note for \$75.00—this seventy dollars was all of the cash capital I possessed to take me on my journey and to establish myself in my professional career.

On the 21st day of April, 1842, I mounted my steed and, after bidding goodbye to my dear parents, brothers and sisters, I passed on my journey; having sent my trunk by Express direct to Malone. I of course took in Brandon, as my Lady Love was at that time at Mr. Blake's upon a visit. After stopping a day or so at Brandon, I resumed my journey, passing through Middlebury and on to Burlington. Mr. Blake had kindly given me a letter of introduction to Mr. William King of Malone, and my cousin, Wm. Noble, of Burlington, also gave me one to Asa Hascall, Esq., of Malone. It was these letters that finally gave me an introduction to the best families of Malone, and I have no doubt, assisted me greatly in the establishment of the practice of my profession there.

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I remember very well the first dollar I ever received for professional services. It was a gold dollar which I received from Mrs. Joseph H. Jackson. I was so much elated at my own good luck that I enclosed the dollar in a letter to your mother, and she had it made into a ring which she wore upon her finger up until the day of her death. I rarely met with any professional discouragement or made many mistakes in my professional and surgical practice, for my strict attention and conservative treatment of diseases that came under my observation at the beginning of my career, gave me a standing and perhaps high position among medical men, and also the community at large which I have ever held up to the present time, has been a source of great pride and satisfaction to me. It has ever been my desire and aim, to treat my pro-

fessional Brethren with that breed of courtesy and etiquette, that the merits of the calling would demand, and I have felt a conscientious gratification for having pursued this course through my whole life; but I did not always receive a similar return.

In September, 1842, I succeeded after great effort in collecting together funds sufficient to take me to Vermont and to defray all necessary expenses incumbent upon the pleasurable duty of taking to myself a life partner who would participate in all the joys and responsibilities of our future life and share in the ills and diversities which most necessarily fall to the lot of all human beings in travelling through life's thorny paths. I also took back with me sufficient funds to take up the note which was given to Woodard the April previous to my departure from Royalton.

On September 15th, 1842, Calvin Skinner and Jane P. Blodget were married in St. Paul's church in Royalton, Vt., by the Rev. Nathaniel Sprague.

The morning of the day of our marriage was inauspicious, and to a superstitious mind forbode a stormy and gloomy future; but, as the shades of evening approached, the rain ceased; the clouds were swept away, and the moon put forth its radiant beams, so that at 8 P.M., the hour of our marriage, the heavens were as bright as the mid-day sunlight. Daniel Huntington and Dudley C. Dennison were the grooms-men—Rachel Denison and Sister Hannah were the bridesmaids. Sister Lucretia used to say that when I promised the "I will" it was so faint and feeble a tone that it was scarcely audible, and could scarcely be heard across the church, but when Mother pronounced the "I will," her voice was loud and strong, distinctly heard throughout the church. I expect this was one of Sister Lucretia's funny *Skinner* jokes. Your Mother tells me that the Rev. Mr. Sprague called upon her during the day, and in conversation remarked, "that even the elements take cognizance of your marriage." Just as we were passing into the church, Sister Hannah turning around and surmising that Sister Jane looked a little flurried, said, "Jane, with my saddlebags I thee endow," which salutation, of course, gave her considerable courage.

The day following our marriage was bright and pleasant, after making all preparations for our departure, and bidding goodbye to fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, and taking the last sad look upon the old homes where we had spent so many happy days. Father Blodget, after having sent out two extra coaches for Burlington, called up the third, drawn by four dapple gray horses; a new Concord coach, and placed upon the seat his best driver (which I think was Moses Church).

Into this coach were seated his daughter, myself and Doctor Huntington, when we were rapidly wheeled toward Burlington at which place we arrived about 7 P.M.

We rode two days making our journey by stage, and reached Malone late in the afternoon of the 17th of September. Mr. Blake had purchased our furniture in New York City and had it shipped to Malone to the care of Wm. King. Upon our arrival we found our goods unpacked in our rooms at the Greene's, to which house we immediately went. The same furniture, or most of it, is now in our present house, and looks as fashionable (in my opinion) as the glossy and furbelowed stuff of the present day, and a vast deal more substantial. I imagine the expression of such an opinion will be declared, by people of the present day, as a sure indication that *I am growing old.*

I think your mother was greatly disappointed upon her arrival at Malone, for she found it a little backwoods place, and the manners and customs of the people were entirely different from those of New England. The ways of doing business outside was carried on upon the store order system, and whenever a purchase was made for our immediate benefit, the everlasting store order question popped up to your Mother's great annoyance. She had always been in the habit of dealing upon the pay down principle, and when we found such enormous store bills accumulating that drew heavily upon our daily earnings on account of this system of doing business, it was somewhat discouraging.

I was also much away from home, which added to her loneliness. But after becoming better acquainted with the Greene family; who ever after drew out our love on account of their kindness and care to make life pleasant to us, also finding the better part of Malone society assiduous in their efforts to make our residence among them pleasant, she soon became very contented. Of course, commencing our married lives with but little capital, we were compelled to exercise quite rigid economy. To give you an idea of the necessity of living within our means, I would say that I rode on horseback summer and winter the first year of my residence in Malone; for the reason of my financial inability to purchase a sleigh or carriages suitable for my comfort. This mode of locomotion was very agreeable in the summer and fall season; but in the winter was somewhat too refrigerating for my pedal extremities. Your Mother received from Mother Blodget and her sisters much of her clothing and other comforts and necessities of life for several years after our marriage. I speak of these things to show you how happy we were in the exercise of these economic habits.

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My father was a great admirer of Clay and Webster, and like them was well grounded in the Whig faith, and his sons followed in his footsteps in their political creed. My first vote was given to William H. Harrison, for president, in 1840. Of course my sympathies were enlisted in behalf of the North, and in defense of Republican principles. In 1855 the first efforts to start a Republican party in Malone was inaugurated by a few old Whigs. Among them was W. A. Wheeler, S. C. Wead, Father Parmelee, Thomas Day, Arunah Wood, S. C. F. Thordike, Elias Williams, Henry Hosford, Calvin Skinner, and four or five others, to the number of 13 or thereabouts. Most of the old Whigs were led foolishly into the fold of KnowNothingism, for which act most of them regretted afterwards.

In 1856, after the nomination of Fremont, the little leaven of 13 votes so strengthened the Republican Party that we were enabled to give more votes than the Know Nothing Party, and almost enough to defeat the Democratic, which was the predominant party in Malone and Franklin County at that time. In the year of 1860, almost the whole of the Know Nothing Party was absorbed into the Republican ranks and we gave a large majority for Lincoln in the county. By the vacillating course pursued by Pres. Buchanan, we were almost compelled to yield to Southern threats, or fight for our cherished principles and the defense of the Union.

At the great Chicago Republican Convention, held in the "Wigwam" in 1860, I was present as alternate delegate, at which convention Abraham Lincoln was nominated for the presidency. Several of the states, among which were New York, Michigan, a part of New England, Rhode Island and the middle states, a number of the western states and territories, sent delegates who were strong supporters of the candidacy of William E. Seward, and were greatly disappointed at our utter defeat. Yet as events proved, thank God he was not. . . . I shall never forget the peculiar appearance of Horace Greeley, as he occupied a prominent place on the stand and therefrom zealously championed the Seward interests for some of the Western Territories, mainly (if I remember correctly) Oregon. Although we were greatly disappointed at the result, still we had every reason, afterward, to thank God we were not successful.

Upon my return, I found the county greatly excited; "Wide Awake" companies being formed, and everything worked up to the highest pitch of patriotism. A large company of Wide Awakes was formed in Malone, and the members insisted that I take the captaincy of the

same; I reluctantly consented, and after forming a thorough organization, and donning our capes and caps, marched forth into every large town in Franklin, St. Lawrence and Clinton County, and the result of our labors showed the efficiency of our efforts at the election which followed. The time and efforts put forth by me, I have no doubt, gave me the office of Postmaster, as I never made any personal efforts to get that position.

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*In March 1862, Calvin Skinner answered the Army's plea for doctors and was commissioned and sent to Fortress Monroe. His memoirs relate in sorry detail the conditions he saw among the Union's wounded soldiers. In 1864 he became ill himself and returned to Malone. His book wryly reports how his trunk was stolen on the train, meaning the loss of his medical instruments, his clothing, and his \$900 severance pay. What dismayed him even more was finding the hardships his family had endured in his absence. But quite in character, he put away the past to pick up the threads of family, medical practice, the Ogdensburg and Lake Champlain Railroad which he helped finance, a new Episcopal Church for Malone, and his appointment as Postmaster for Malone. Whether moved more by his great interest in politics or by the need for a vacation, one of the liveliest accounts in the memoirs is of the Skinners' trip to Washington:*

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At Genl. Grant's second inauguration March 4th, 1872, I had a great desire to be present upon that occasion and urged your Mother to accompany me and at last she consented. We made up a party consisting of your Mother, [daughter] Ella, Hattie King (Mrs. Belden), Mrs. Hiram Thompson, Wallace King & Wife, Mrs. Nettie King and myself. We reached Washington March 2 and went immediately to the quarters that had been previously engaged for us on Pennsylvania Avenue. As I had been in Washington several times, I took upon myself the pleasurable duty of acting as chaperoning conductor for the party. The fourth of March, Inauguration Day, was one of the most bleak, cold days that I remember ever seeing. The cold wind was blowing a gale carrying with it clouds of dust and small gravel stones. It was so cold and uncomfortable that the stands and balconies which had been rented on Pennsylvania Avenue could not be occupied with

any degree of comfort. However King and I, determined not to be foiled, hired a balcony on the front part of the house where we were stopping, upon which could stand six or seven persons, for the extreme low price of *thirty* dollars, and here the ladies had an excellent view of the procession as it passed to the Capitol. The day passed as usual with great noise, big crowds, fine music. King and I went to the Capitol and witnessed the Inaugural ceremonies. Mrs. Wheeler<sup>1</sup> came to our rooms and presented the whole party with tickets to the Inauguration Ball. We accepted the tickets with thanks and tried to put ourselves in a condition for the occasion. The Ball was held in a temporary building just back of the Treasury building. It was very cold and no means of heating the room. Well we were conducted into the Hall upon the ticket process. Of course we were unaccustomed to such splendor and flare of dress and fashion and it would be nothing very strange if we looked a little wild with amusement. Upon the platform with Pres. Grant and Mrs. Grant was his secretary of state Hamilton Fish and wife. Mrs. Fish was one of the most stately and commanding figures of the evening and in fact, did more to give the occasion official dignity than Mrs. Grant herself. The Assembly consisted of Cabinet officials, Naval and Army officers, Foreign Ministers and the Elite of all nations. After bowing obeisence to Pres. and Mrs. Grant, then commencing the promenading ceremonies, I was so thoroughly captivated with the scene and the delightful music that I turned to Ella and asked her if she would not like to accompany me in a promenade. She consented, and we joined the long line of promenaders. We had not walked more than fifty feet before I (of course) stepped upon the train of an elegantly dressed and stately appearing lady, which brought her to a halt. In my humble way I offered her an apology notwithstanding, as she turned around I observed that she was a highly polished colored lady. After having enjoyed the fancifull flutter and dance, we at a late hour retired from the scene.

We spent several days in looking over the most interesting places and departments in the City, such as Treasury, Patent Office, Smithsonian Observatory, White House, Ford's Theater where Mr. Lincoln was killed. This building was used for the deposit of surgical specimens of the late war, at that time. We spent much time at the Capitol and tried to leave nothing unseen from the top to the bottom. Congress was then in session and we took the opportunity to visit both the House and Senate and saw the distinguished men. I was glad to see Mr. Wheeler

1. Wife of Vice President William A. Wheeler.

called to the Speaker's Chair to preside, while we were present in the House, and was informed by several members of the House that Mr. Wheeler was oftener called to take the Speaker's Chair than any other member on account of the expeditious way he conducted business and the correctness of his decisions, upon which there was scarcely ever an appeal. We visited the Capitol on Monday following the inauguration, of course all was rush and commotion and your Mother turning to Mrs. Thompson remarked, "Only think, Jane Skinner pleasuring on Monday, and no smell of suds."

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*Vice-President of the United States under President Hayes in 1877 was William A. Wheeler of Malone, a personal friend of Calvin Skinner's who had secured his appointment as Postmaster. Dr. Skinner, who saw the best in all men, deeply respected Wheeler's struggle up the political ladder despite his lack of family and education. He writes this of Wheeler:*

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Mr. Wheeler was a man of peculiar characteristics. His father died while he was young, left the responsibility and care of his mother and sisters mostly upon him. As there was but little property left by his Father, he had to apply himself to work, such as keeping school, etc. His education was only such as he received at the common school and academy of Franklin County. He was a self made man, but of good mind and common sense. Whatever he did, he did intelligently and with judgment. With his somewhat limited educational privileges, it does seem somewhat miraculous that he should [have] so intelligently and satisfactorily filled so many prominent positions, both in the state and nation, first as District Attorney, then Member of Assembly, State Senator, twice Member of Congress, Pres. of State Constitutional Convention, and Vice President of the United States. His last efforts to gain the United States Senatorship were ineffectual and the disappointment so disaffected him that he returned from all political and local affairs at the time and never appeared to take an interest in anything afterward. For the great interest Mr. Wheeler took in my welfare and the welfare of my family I shall ever hold his memory in kind remembrance. I was his supporter in all things that pertained to the advancement of political, social and educational interest of Franklin County.

When he was elected Vice President, he remarked to me that any one that took that position, dug his political grave; for this put an end to all future preferment. He was remarkably liberal and generous to all denominations and creeds without distinction. In all enterprises which would help Malone he was first and foremost, such as Water Works, Rail Road, school interest. Why should I not love and admire the man, for through him I received all preference, such as Post Office and other positions, without even the circulation of a petition in my behalf. It seemed very sad to all his friends that so generous and useful a man should permit his light to fade away at his age, and that so mysterious a cloud should fall upon him at the end of his earthly existence.

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*Toward the end of the memoirs, Calvin Skinner goes back to examine how the Skinner family originally came to Vermont. Calvin's father was a small boy and Royalton a very young town:*

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. . . Sometime in the year of 1779 or 80 Grandmother Skinner married Lieutenant Zebulon Lyon in the town of Woodstock, Conn. (Grandfather Skinner died in the war.) Perhaps Lieut. Lyon from his title may have been connected with the army and in the same Regiment with Grandfather Skinner, however of this supposition I have no positive knowledge and his name is not on record. In the year 1780 or thereabouts Lieut. Lyon and Grandmother started upon their long and tedious journey to Vermont, for at that time this was considered an almost endless journey. They of course took with them Sally and Calvin.<sup>2</sup> Aunt Washburn informed me that she was between six and seven years of age, and Father was three. I have heard of many interesting things and incidents related that happened during their journey from Woodstock, Conn. to Royalton, Vt., but as I did not treasure them up they have passed from my memory. Grandfather and Grandmother Lyon must have arrived at Royalton sometime in the year of 1780 and took up their residence there living in the house afterward owned and occupied by John Francis, Esq.

2. Her children.

Grandfather Lyon was an active intelligent and busy man, although somewhat visionary in his financial views. He must have brought considerable amount of personal property into Royalton. Still I mistrust he ran recklessly into debt, and in accordance with existing Vermont laws for these debts was thrown upon Jail limits and spent his last days upon these limits at Woodstock, Vt. never being able to get released. After the death of the first Grandmother Lyon which must have I think taken place before he left Royalton, Grandfather Lyon married for his second wife Miss or Mrs. Dana of Pomfret, Vt. Whether Grandfather Lyon had any children by his second wife I am unable to say. After Grandfather Lyon's death Grandmother Lyon continued to live in Woodstock, Vt. and it was with her I boarded while attending my first course of Medical Lectures at Woodstock, Vt. in 1838.

Aunt Sally Skinner, Father's only sister, was very like Father in temperament and disposition, quiet and gentle, thoughtful and conscientious in her daily walk and conversation. When she was fourteen years of age, she became engaged to the Rev. Asahel Washburn, at the time the minister of the Congregational Church at Royalton. Although many years older than Aunt Sally, they were married very much against the advice and wishes of her relatives and friends, for reasons hereafter stated. Uncle Washburn although a highly educated man, capable of preaching acceptably to any intelligent congregation, was afflicted with a hereditary predisposition to insanity, two or more of his brothers were similarly afflicted. The form of insanity was periodical, sometimes furious, and at other times his acts and appearance like any sane person. It was during one of these sane periods that he became infatuated with Aunt Sally and married her. Mother Skinner told me, that the first Sunday after this marriage, while Uncle was officiating in the pulpit and just before the commencement of his sermon, he walked down the steps from his high pulpit and entering the minister's pew, leaned over and kissed his young bride, and then returned and calmly delivered his sermon. This freak of insanity very much annoyed my Father and was a great source of enjoyment to his congregation.

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*As Dr. Skinner's memoirs draw to a close, family stories like these appear often. He wrote these final pages as an invalid, and his thoughts were mainly of the past, of his family, and of the hereafter. Although he lived out the days until his death in 1903 in his Malone home, his recurring thoughts and memories were about the Vermont of his boyhood.*