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# GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Newsletter

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Volume 38 Issue 1

Groton, Vermont

Spring 2025

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### 2024 OFFICERS

**President** ..... Deborah Jurist  
**Vice President** ... Brent Smith  
**Secretaries** ..... Sarah Spira,  
Phyllis Burke  
**Treasurer** .. Susan Pelkey Smith  
**Directors** ..... Patrick Ayer,  
Allen Goodine,  
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**Newsletter**  
**Editor** ..... Louise Reynolds  
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**Editor** ..... Terry Miller  
**Genealogist** ... John Willard Benzie

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*Do you Know the Story  
Of Bristol Bill  
And his  
Gang of Counterfeiters?*

GHS President Deborah Jurist will give a talk on the subject at the Danville Historical Society at 1 p.m. on Sunday, April 27.

## Unearthing History: Objects, ancestors, a house

*Talking about why and how we search for the past*

LOUISE REYNOLDS



*This issue focuses on our curiosity about the past as we take a look at four people who have searched for the stories of those who have gone before. In this piece, a novice detectorist tells the story of his first find, and a seasoned "mud dog" relates his adventures and gives some advice.*

*In the two pieces that follow, an amateur genealogist undertakes extensive research to learn his family history, and a historical house stokes the imagination.*

*The photo above is of a cellar hole. It's not the cellar hole that Patrick Ayer writes about. Why? Because detectorists may share their finds online, but they rarely share the specific location of the search.*

### My First Time Out was Early Spring...

PATRICK AYER

Many years ago, I was shown a pile of rocks in the woods in an area of Groton that was settled by some of the first residents of the town. I was told it was a stone foundation, though I wasn't sure I believed it. It looked like a pile of rocks in the woods to me. But there were some old scythe blades laying around that I thought were fascinating.

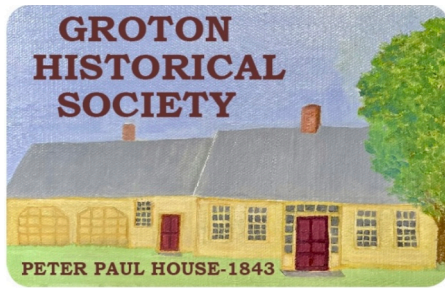
As I got older, I'd go back to the pile of rocks now and then, look at the scythe blades and consider what might have gone on there. It started to look more and more like a stone foundation to me, but to

what? The footprint seemed too small to be a house, maybe a sugarhouse? A pig barn? Or maybe it was actually just a pile of rocks left by farmers clearing land in the 1800's.

Eventually I moved away but thought about that spot now and then. Several years later I found myself back in Vermont, living close to that old pile of stone, and I decided it was time to find out more about it. So I armed myself with a metal detector and a shovel and went out to see if I could find some answers.

My first time out was early spring.

*Continued on p.4*



## President's Report Spring 2025

The GHS had lots going on in the dead of winter this year.

We had a fun meeting in February, during which we voted in a new Director, Patrick Ayer, who has deep roots in Groton through his family, the Chandlers. He spent many hours this winter populating a new "finding tool," which cataloged donations of items made from 2007 through 2016 as they were recorded in meeting notes. We are looking forward to a treasure hunt to find these items, when the Peter Paul House is opened this spring. He is not replacing anyone; we have the capacity to have nine Directors!

Library assistant Jen Cowhig worked to digitally record the GHS collection of old Town Reports and GHS newsletters. We now have a document showing all the

years we have issues for both. There is a set of Town Reports and newsletters at both the PPH and the Library. We are missing a few years, listed **below**. If you have copies you are willing to donate it would be much appreciated.

At the Town Meeting March 4, voters approved our request for a \$1,000 appropriation. The citizens of Groton were very appreciative of all the work we do to preserve the town's history. This appropriation will be a good foundation from which we can build our annual fundraising. Perhaps we might even be able to afford internet accessibility at the PPH! I expect to repeat this request annually.

Searching for a solution to how we can display and protect our most valuable items, we traveled to the Danville Historical Society to see how they display their Civil War uniform. It was a lovely outing, and we came away with some ideas for showcasing our own pre-Civil War era uniform. Our challenge is how to display valuable, but fragile, artifacts so folks can enjoy seeing them, while protecting them from being handled or stolen—or damaged by insects or mold.

The Vermont State Roving Archivist will be visiting the PPH on March 31; all are welcome to observe. Time for some professional guidance.

To a new season of growth and vitality,  
**Deborah Jurist**

## SAVE THE DATE!



**Free Community Event  
Saturday June 28th**

**Rain or Shine!**

**Open Houses,  
Events, Activities,  
Information Booths  
and Refreshments**



## GHS Open Houses

The Peter Paul House will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the first Saturdays of the month, starting in June.

**June 7th**

**June 28th (Library collaboration)**

**July 5th**

**August 2nd**

**September 6th (tbd)**

**October 4<sup>th</sup>, Fall Foliage Day**

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**3/31, Monday, 2-5 pm:** The Roving Archivist comes to the Peter Paul House: Members are welcome to observe as Jane Cadawlder, the Vermont State Historical Society's Roving Archivist looks through our collection and suggests how we can better archive and store our treasures.

**4/6, Sunday, 6 pm:** The Newbury Historical Society presents "Eating Wild," Newbury's Hunting and Fishing Traditions. See NHS website for details.

**4/18, Friday, 5:30-pm:** Kitchen Tunks & Parlor Songs: Presenter Mark Greenberg will share his experiences searching for, meeting, and recording Vermonters who, in the 1980s, were continuing the traditions of home-made and community-based music. With recorded music and video. This presentation is supported by Vermont Humanities. *Sponsored by the Groton Free Public Library*

**5/16, Friday, 6-7 pm:** A Recipe for Success: Finding Women Through Community Cookbooks: Community and church cookbooks are treasures that give us a glimpse of female groups, encapsulated in a place and time, a springboard to genealogical adventure. Join Historian Erin E. Moulton as we traipse over recipes for Ghorabie, Pacific Slope Punch, and Maple Creams in search of clues to unlock the stories of our female ancestors. Participants will receive a few choice vintage recipes as well as a "recipe" for research planning. Attendees are encouraged to bring along a cherished cookbook or recipe to share with the group. Erin explores more "recipes from the grave" on Substack. You can find her at <https://erinemoulton.substack.com/>  
*Sponsored by the Groton Free Public Library*

## To the Thawing Wind

*Robert Frost*

Come with rain, O loud Southwester!  
Bring the singer, bring the nester;  
Give the buried flower a dream;  
Make the settled snowbank steam;  
Find the brown beneath the white;  
But whate'er you do tonight,  
Bathe my window, make it flow,  
Melt it as the ice will go;  
Melt the glass and leave the sticks  
Like a hermit's crucifix;  
Burst into my narrow stall;  
Swing the picture on the wall;  
Run the rattling pages o'er;  
Scatter poems on the floor;  
Turn the poet out of door.



## Groton Historical Society Treasurer's Report as of 12/31/2024

In 2024, the Trustees spent considerable time reviewing and updating our insurance coverage, which saved us money. We increased outreach for donations, with a generous total of \$5,568 received in 2024.

A full Treasurer's Report for calendar year 2024 appears on our website. As of December 31, 2024, here is a summary of our 2024 activity.

Revenues totaled \$7,496 as summarized below:

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Membership revenue, including 14 lifetime memberships | \$1,675      |
| Book, puzzle and merchandise sales                    | 253          |
| Donations, including \$365 in memorial donations      | <u>5,568</u> |
| Total revenue   | <u>7,496</u> |

Expenditures totaled \$3,906 as summarized below:

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Insurance   | 1,202        |
| Operating expenses (postal, electric, mowing, etc.) | 2,512        |
| Purchases (books & merchandise for resale)          | 52           |
| Website hosting, domaine and monitoring             | <u>140</u>   |
| Total expenditures                                  | <u>3,906</u> |

Excess of revenues over expenses for the year ended 12/31/2024 \$3,590

Funds available:

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Checking account balance 12/31/2024               | \$12,400        |
| Cash on hand for events                           | 50              |
| Certificate of Deposit at 4.5%, matures 1/19/2025 | <u>15,921</u>   |
| Total funds available at 12/31/2024               | <u>\$28,371</u> |

Respectfully submitted,

**Susan Pelkey Smith, Treasurer**



## Can You Help?

### Missing Town Reports

Both the Groton Free Public Library and the GHS have nearly complete sets of Town Reports and GHS newsletters. The Town Clerk has all of the older Town Report bound into volumes stored in the vault.

However, to complete the collection at the GHS, anyone who has a copy of the 1884, 1885 or 1893 Report and is willing to donate it, please contact [grotonvthistory@gmail.com](mailto:grotonvthistory@gmail.com). Thank you!

### Historic Site Mapping

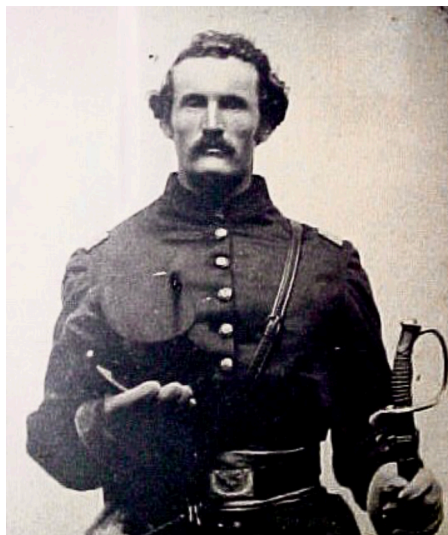
Have you ever heard someone mention, or read about a bygone historic Groton landmark, like the "old iron bridge over the river," or "the Benzie quarry," or the "hydroelectric dam" and wondered where, exactly, that was? Brent Smith and Allen Goodine are working on a project to add such gone, but not forgotten, historic landmarks to the Groton portion of the Vermont EMS 911 map. If you have a suggestion for adding similar sites, please share them with Brent or Allen via the GHS email: [grotonvthistory@gmail.com](mailto:grotonvthistory@gmail.com).

## Correction



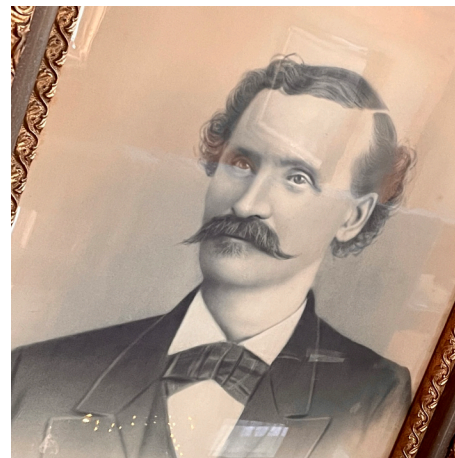
In the Winter newsletter, the caption under the photo of William Peck's uniform on page 1 is incorrect. The uniform is not "Civil War-era." Instead, it's a Parade Uniform used by the Vermont Volunteer Militia prior to the Civil War.

William Valorous Peck served 10 years in the Lafayette Artillery of the Militia at Calais, Vermont, where he was commissioned 1st Lieutenant in 1860.



In September of 1862, he was recruited into Company H, 13th Regiment, Vermont Volunteer Infantry, and was commissioned Captain.

Captain Peck was the great grandfather of former GHS newsletter editor Willard Benzie and his sister, Janet Benzie Puffer. His drum and Parade Uniform were a gift to the GHS from the Benzie family.



Captain Peck was given an Honorable Discharge on 20th of January, 1863, due to ill health. Less than six months later the 13th Regiment of the Vermont Volunteer Infantry fought in the three-day Battle of Gettysburg, between July 1 and 3. Their term of service expired a few weeks later, and they were ordered home. The Regiment was mustered out July 21, 1863.

William Valorous Peck died November 10, 1910, at the age of 76. He's buried in the Fairview Cemetery in East Calais.

**"My First Time Out,"** *cont.*

There was still some snow and the ground was pretty frozen in the woods, but I couldn't wait any longer. I swung the detector around for an hour or so and ended up finding a couple metal flat buttons, some iron odds and ends and a brass knee buckle, which was a shock. Not only did this mean there was somebody living there, but the knee buckle also meant it was probably in the 1700's.

It was painful waiting for the ground to thaw, but once it did and I had some time I went back. I found a few more metal buttons and some more pieces of iron and eventually got a signal on the detector that was too good to be true. As I dug the hole, I thought to myself, "don't get too excited, it's probably just another button, or maybe an old shotgun shell."

As I flipped over the shovel full of dirt, there it was, a small disc with a green patina. I was still telling myself there was no way it was going to be a coin. I picked it up and brushed some of the dirt away.

At the bottom, I saw the number 17. I was so excited I could hardly look at it, afraid I'd seen it wrong.

Once I got it home and cleaned up I realized what I had was a British coin from the reign of George II, dated 1749. A bit of research told me the denomination was a farthing—or a quarter of a penny. What an awesome find.

It's fascinating to me to consider the journey that coin went on. Minted in the tower of London 27 years before the founding of America, it sailed across the Atlantic in the pocket of some intrepid person on their way to the New World. Eventually lost by a resident of a new, emerging town in northeast Vermont and dug up hundreds of years later by a guy using a machine the past holders of the coin could never imagine.

If you have an old stone foundation or cellar hole in your backyard, get out there and explore it. You never know what might be right under the surface and you might just save a piece of history from being lost forever.



**The 1749 farthing Patrick Ayer found in a cellar hole. Head (left) and tail (right).**

**What Patrick found** is a George II "old head" farthing, worth one quarter of a penny, with 240 pennies to the pound. During the reign of King George II, from 1727 until 1760, the Royal Mint issued coins with two different busts of the King, the "young head" and the "old head," beginning in 1741. The reverse side of the farthing shows "Brittania," the female personification of Britain.

King George farthings were rarely coined after 1754 because there was a glut of copper coins in the system—and the "coppers" were increasingly being counterfeited. New coins were minted beginning in 1771, ten years after George II's grandson, George III, succeeded him on the throne and became the face of the farthing.

Although it was in great use during World War II, the quarter-penny coin became increasingly impractical as inflation rose in the years following the war. The last farthings were coined in 1956 and demonetized several years later.

**Sources:** "Coincraft." Coincraft.com;  
"History of the British Farthing." Wikipedia.  
15 March, 2024.



**An "old-head" King George II farthing, coined in 1754. They were minted beginning in 1741.**

## 'I'm Certainly Gonna Keep Digging'

*Q & A with Mud Dog Mandy*



**LOUISE REYNOLDS**

*Philip Mandolare, aka "Mud Dog Mandy," lives in Pittsford, Vermont. He's been an avid detectorist for the last 12 years and regularly posts videos (284 so far) on his YouTube channel, where he has a following of 4,250 viewers. I've watched a few—it's hard to stop! He's also the Vice President of the Clarendon, Vermont, Historical Society. You can see some of the artifacts he's dug up over the years at the Pittsford Historical Society; they're also in collections of the Clarendon, Brandon and Danby historical societies. He was kind enough to answer some of my questions.*

**How long have you been using a metal detector to discover these treasures?**

**What got you started?**

I've been detecting since 2013. I grew up in a town called Fort Edward, NY. The fort was built in 1755 along the Hudson River. When I was around ten years old I would ride my bike down to a historic site called Rogers Island. This was across the water from the fort location. I would spend hours watching the archaeologist dig artifacts from that site. It captivated me. Many years later with the advent of metal detecting videos on YouTube the spark was re-ignited.

**What's the most interesting artifact you've found?**

I get asked that a lot. It's a hard question because there are so many different categories: coins, buttons, military related (Revolutionary War, Civil War). One example is now in the Pittsford Historical

*Continued on p.5*



**“Digging,” cont.**

Mud Dog Mandy has posted 270 videos of his metal hunting sessions on YouTube. In video #189, from a 1700's site, he finds several .63 caliber “Rev War” musket balls, a LOT of buttons—and this 1787 Connecticut copper.



It's hard to describe how addicting these videos are as you watch Mud Dog shovel up a find and muse about it before he cleans it up. His narration adds to the suspense. Here's a hand-forged striker from a cornfield, in video #204.



Video # 258, posted within the last year, is especially interesting. At a site that was, at one time, the home of a spy for the British—where Mud Dog had previously found a Rev War British hand grenade—he found this 26<sup>th</sup> Regiment British coat button. He's gone over this area “about a million times,” he says, “but it always pays to go back.”

Society display. I was digging at a 1770 home site settled by a man named Roger Stevens. He had a son named Roger Stevens Jr. who was a Tory spy for the British in the Revolutionary War. I found a Revolutionary War hand grenade and several British Revolutionary War regiment buttons at that site.

I find most anything from the 1700's is interesting, and the story it tells. That's a tough question.

**What's the largest (size) or most significant?**

I think ax heads, scythe blades, horseshoes and oxen shoes and old farm equipment are usually the larger finds and mostly made of iron.

**What have you done with what you've found?**

I always offer the find, no matter how wonderful, to the property owner. If they don't want it and it has historical value I offer it to that town's historical society. If they don't want it, I'll keep it for my collection.

The things I always get to keep are the pictures, videos, memories, and the pleasure of meeting the people I've met because of this hobby. It's the best part!

**How do you decide where to explore? What does that involve?**

I study old maps and town history books. I also use online maps and a technology called LIDAR. Lidar allows you to see features and contours on the surface you can't see otherwise (cellar holes, abandoned roads, stone walls etc). Sometimes it is word of mouth, like my Newbury experience.

**What's been your biggest challenge?**

Finding time and getting older. I guess we all have that challenge. I retired from my 30+ year electric utility job in 2014, so that does free me up a lot.

**What kind of equipment do you use?**

In 2013 I watched a lot of metal detecting videos and decided to buy the one most popular at the time, Garrett AT Pro. Later I purchased the Garrett AT Max and now I use the Notka Legend. The reason for the changing/upgrading is, because like everything else, the technology keeps improving. I advise everyone that the more important thing is the location, location, location. Even the most expensive detector you can buy won't find anything if there's nothing there.

**Do you have any advice for someone who's just starting out?**

Before you buy a detector, do your research. Find what everyone is using in your price range. YouTube is a great resource. Once you purchase, get comfortable with your detector. It's all about learning the sound coming from the ground. I think of it like a doctor's stethoscope. They listen to what's going on inside you but if you listened, you'd have no idea what all the noise is about.

It takes time. Place a few different items on the surface of the ground (coins, iron nail, tin can etc) and start to recognize the different sounds you hear. Then after that, start searching and at first dig everything—and once you identify it, remember the sound it made. You'll start learning how to distinguish the junk from the precious metals. And be patient! Swing low and slow. The higher the coil is off the ground, the weaker the signal will be.

Watch my Proctor Library Presentation video in the link below; it covers everything I've mentioned. Good luck!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSkm5DgIM\\_A&t=100s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSkm5DgIM_A&t=100s)

**DETECTORISTS**

Do you have any great finds or stories you'd love to share? Please email us at [grotonvthistory@gmail.com](mailto:grotonvthistory@gmail.com), with “Newsletter” in your subject line.

## GHS Member Bob Murphy's been tracing his family history for more than 50 years

In late February, GHS member Bob Murphy reached out to the GHS to see if the report he had recently completed—a thoroughly researched genealogy of his third great grandparents, William Plummer and Olive Morrison—might be suitable for publication in this newsletter. Unfortunately, the newsletter doesn't have room for a piece that long, so Deborah Jurist told Bob his genealogy would be included in the GHS archives, both physically and digitally, and perhaps we could include a link to it in an upcoming newsletter.

Well, I read the piece once, quickly, and agreed it would be too long for a newsletter article. But, after reading Patrick Ayer's farthing story again, and reading Deborah's story about the family who lived in her house before the Glover family settled there, I went back to read it again. And I realized that what these three stories have in common is the desire to connect with our elders—to think about the lives they lived, and perhaps imagine how they prevailed against the challenges they faced in what were certainly harsh conditions. What Bob has achieved with his research is more than genealogy.

Reading William Plummer and Olive Morrison's story made me imagine; it also made me think it would be interesting to know why—and how—Bob undertook this mission. He was generous enough to explain.

**Here is a link to Bob Murphy's reporting on his third great grandparents, William Plummer and Olive Morrison:**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/18LCLekJ6dukibLk3yPxvGMKCS4v\\_UFO/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/18LCLekJ6dukibLk3yPxvGMKCS4v_UFO/view?usp=sharing)

### What got you started and what was your initial objective?

I started in 1966. I didn't know much about my family history or how I was connected to some of my aunts, uncles and such.

### How did you begin? Did you use a specific program or website?

I started with letters to my and my wife's parents, listing the relationships we knew and asked for them to fill out what they could. This was back when about the only program I was (eventually) aware of was "Personal Ancestry File." I can't recall when I started using it, but I eventually migrated through a series of them until settling on "The Master Genealogist." The owner stopped supporting it in 2014, but it is still the program I rely on. I have purchased "Roots Magic 10," but have yet not moved to it.

### What was the most surprising/fascinating thing you learned about your family that you hadn't known?

Immediately, we were given lots of info about our parents, their siblings and families, and some ancestry, but not a lot. It took a lot of research to extend it out to previous times. Tracing my Murphy ancestry was the most difficult aspect of my research, and despite two trips to the Emerald Isle, most of what I have learned has come from public and church records here and in Canada.

Perhaps the most surprising discovery came about after getting my DNA tested and finding no connections to my Murphy relatives. I used DNA research to uncover

my biological father. (But I still consider my father the man who raised me.)

### What was the biggest challenge you faced in doing your research?

The biggest challenges have been the lack of records in many places prior to 1900, particularly in Ireland. Another is the challenge of researching women (particularly in the U.S.), where tradition has them abandoning their surnames upon marrying and often being referred to in many documents and newspapers simply as Mrs. (husband's name and surname).

### What did you come to admire most about your ancestors?

I am in awe of the times they lived through, the difficulties of life they endured, and their persistence in trying to improve their and their families' lives.

### Finally, do you have any advice for someone starting out with a similar undertaking?

Always check sources and be sure you get the facts. Relying on the information readily available on the internet is tempting, but there is a lot of misinformation and a lot of errors out there. Recognize that, with DNA now available, you have a tool that prior generations did not have, so don't hesitate to use it.

Finally, join a genealogical society or group and become an active member. You will be surprised and fascinated by the work and experience of others. You will never get to the point where there is nothing left to learn.



**William Plummer and Olive Morrison are buried in the Groton Village Cemetery.**

## Getting Started

### Step 1: Start with yourself

Gather your birth, marriage, and other records, then work backward through your parents, grandparents, etc. Don't skip generations.

### Step 2: Talk to Family and Friends

Your relatives can be a goldmine of information. Ask about family traditions, letters, and records. Family Bibles, photo albums can offer a trove of insights.

### Step 3: Become a Detective

Visit family **graveyards** for inscriptions and dates. County **courthouses, churches, and libraries** hold birth, marriage, and property records. Most states have birth and death records. The **National Archives and Records Administration** documents military service, passenger arrival, naturalization, taxation, court actions, land ownership, and much more. Historical **maps**, plat books, and topographic maps may show family-owned land or burial sites.

### Step 4: Create a Pedigree Chart

Focus on 4 key data points: *names, dates, places, and relationships*. And record full names, birth/marriage/death dates, and always use maiden names for women. Free printable family charts are available at KBYU Ancestors and Ancestry.com.

### Step 5: Use a Research Notebook

A three-ring binder with dividers for charts, documents, and notes makes on-site research easier. Log every source you check, even if you don't find anything.

### Step 7: Get a Good "How-To" Book

Guides like *The Researcher's Guide to American Genealogy* by Val Greenwood and *Idiot's Guide to Genealogy* by Christine Rose offer excellent research strategies.

**Sources:** Arizona Secretary of State, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Archives



# Imagining the Widow Gray

*Deborah Jurist is the President of the Groton Historical Society. She and her husband, Mark Gleicher, have lived on the property once known as the Glover Farm since 1983. For the last 32 years, they've lived in Waldo Glover's house. Glover, Groton's storied town historian, casts a long shadow.*

*Recently, Deborah has been digging into the history of the house. She wrote this piece on March 8, 2025, International Women's Day.*

## DEBORAH JURIST

This winter I went adventuring into the history of Glover Farm. I wanted to confirm stories I'd been told about the property, but the journey took an unexpected turn.

It began with a search of the old deeds in the Groton Town Offices.

When I stepped into the vault, I faced a collection of magnificent leather-bound books, each weighing 10 lbs. or more, bright red, with a number on its spine. The books sat atop metal rollers on shelves, organized chronologically.



**The vault in the Groton Town Offices contains property books dating from 1797. Groton was chartered in 1789 and organized at the first Town Meeting in 1797.**

I looked at the oldest one first. It was a small red book titled "Groton Proprietor's Book of Records." I searched for Lot number 21, where the Glover Farm resides. It was granted to Thomas Butterfield; here is the description I found:

"begins at a birchwood tree standing on the East line of the town marked L20. L21 which is the NE corner of No 20 and runs N 69 degrees W and runs N 52 chains and 25 links to a bush tree marked L20...good for grain, syrup, wood beech and maple."

Waldo Glover wrote that Dominicus Gray built the first frame house in Groton on Lot 21 in 1797 (*Mr. Glover's Groton*, p.116). While I found no deed from Thomas Butterfield to Mr. Gray, I did find a 1797 deed showing that Mr. Gray sold a portion of Lot 21 to John Darling.

Dominicus Gray was a Revolutionary War soldier who hailed from Maine. He was born April 26, 1761. According to Glover history, Otis, the first Glover to buy the farm, would see Mr. Gray on the property, always in Revolutionary garb, wearing a tricorne hat and "plait" (or braid) as he fixed his stone walls.

On April 25, 1832, Dominicus Gray sold Lot 21 for \$1,000 to his son, Andrew, along with several other pieces of property in Groton. Mr. Gray died at the age of 71 on October 21st of that year.

His wife, Sarah Plummer Gray, was also born in Maine, in 1762. She married Dominicus on her 23rd birthday, November 24th, in Sanford. She gave birth to four girls, Patience, Mary, Ruth and Sarah, and one boy, Andrew. She was 70 when Dominicus died, and she lived until she was 94. She died in Groton on April 24, 1856.

I wondered, what was her life like for the next 24 years? Where did she live? Did she stay in the house? Who took care of her? Did she tend the fires in the fireplaces in the old house on nights as cold as they were this year? Did she get water from the well in front of the house? Oh, her feet must have been cold! And I so wonder what she looked like.

Sarah's daughters Patience and Mary both married Maine boys; one was a Welch and the other a Whitcher. Between them, they had 23 children. They both died in Groton and are buried in the "Old Groton Cemetery."

Sarah's daughter Ruth married a Nelson boy from Ryegate and had eight children. She died in Hardwick.

But the story does not end here.

An 1851 deed shows that just five years before her death, Sarah Gray, along with daughter Mary's husband, Hosea Welch, purchased the land now known as the Gray Cemetery, at the four corners on Glover Road. The interesting part of the story is that Reuben Whitcher, the husband of Patience, owned the land that was Lot Number 20, adjoining Lot Number 21. Both Dominicus and son Andrew were already at rest in this burial ground.

Sarah also sold Lot Number 102, just on the east side of the Wells River, to her son-in-law, William Nelson, Ruth's husband. Perhaps Ruth and her family also lived nearby.

So now we have some tidbits for the imaginary widowhood of Sarah Gray. Her

husband died when she was 70; her only son passed away just three years later. They were both buried in the Gray Cemetery, on her daughter Patience Whitcher's land, adjoining her own property.

Patience had 13 children. The oldest, George, was 24 when Sarah was widowed. He fathered her first great-grandchild, Jennie Whitcher, born on Christmas, 1837; Patience and Reuben's twins, Elizabeth and Nelson, were just 16. The youngest of Patience and Reuben's children, Emiline was born one year after Dominicus passed away.

Sarah's other daughters provided her with many more grandchildren; altogether, she had 31. All this family makes me think that Sarah was probably relied upon for help with the children and was also a well cared for Grandmother.

The saddest part of the story is that Sarah's only son, Andrew, married a Barnet girl named Jane Gilchrist. They had a little girl "about" 1834, just one year before Andrew died, at age 43.

So there were two widows in the Gray family. I wonder where Jane and baby Margaret lived? I am going to imagine they lived with Sarah.



**Deborah's imagination has been sparked by the beauty and the history of her house. Her painting of a young mother and child in a doorway was inspired by John-François Millet.**

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