
GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

Volume 24 Issue 2

Groton, Vermont 05046

Spring 2011

1930 GROTON FAMILIES

in census enumerated by George H. Blanchard

MEETING SCHEDULE

10 AM the second Tuesday
of May through October
at the Peter Paul House
1203 Scott Highway
Groton, VT 05046

2011 OFFICERS

President	Richard Brooks
Vice President	Deane Page
Secretary	Josephine French
Treasurer	Joan Haskell

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The 1930 census is the most recent one released to the public. Census records are held confidential for 72 years by law, so the 1940 census records will not be available until 2012.

The population of Groton in 1930 was 803 people representing 153 family names, one more than was listed in the 1920 census.

The Great Depression of the 1930's was triggered by the stock market crash in the fall of 1929. Relief programs to put people to work included CCC camps one of which, the 146th Company, was located in Groton State Forest. Other programs and agencies established to help regain prosperity were: FHA, FICA, NIRA, NLRA, NRA, PWA, SSA, TVA, and WPA known as the alphabet programs. The public debt nearly doubled from \$22 Billion to \$40 Billion.

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Although the New Deal programs failed to stimulate full economic recovery, they greatly expanded the role of the federal government in the economic and social life of the country which is still being felt today.

McLure's Student Band of Groton was started in 1932. The Plummer School closed in 1932. Slate blackboards were installed in Groton Schools in 1933 and by 1935 the school furnished text books. Hot lunches were provided by the home economics teacher starting in 1936. The taxes to support schools shifted from local towns and school districts to higher levels of government resulting in greater administrative cost and less local control. The William Scott Memorial was dedicated in 1936. State Route 232 through Groton State Forest, connecting US 2 and US 302, was built by the CCC crews in the 1930's and Route US 302 through Groton was paved. Beckley Bus Service and Vermont Transit provided bus transportation in Groton. The Montpelier & Wells River Railroad operated four trains a day stopping at the Groton Depot for passengers, freight and mail. Although Groton and the nation was facing tough times in the Great Depression, life went on and everyone pitched in to help those in need. The Overseer of the Poor in Groton provided help to more than 20 families each year during the 30's in addition to annually feeding or housing 120 tramps or "Hobos" looking for work.

Family Names in 1930 Groton Census

(Number counted and new family names *italicized*)

Adams (1)	Annis (4)	Ashford (6)	Bailey (10)
Bain (4)	Baldwin (2)	<i>Bartlett</i> (4)	<i>Beck</i> (3)
Beckley (1)	Benzie (6)	<i>Birnie</i> (1)	Bixby (4)
Blanchard(10)	Boomhower(5)	<i>Boutwell</i> (1)	Bowen(1)
Bowles(3)	<i>Bridges</i> (1)	Brink(1)	Brown(10)
Caldwell(8)	<i>Campbell</i> (2)	Carbee(2)	Carpenter(21)
Carter(4)	Cassidy(7)	<i>Chamberlin</i> (1)	Clark(8)
Coffrin(2)	<i>Converse</i> (1)	Corruth(6)	Crown(5)

Dana(1)	Daniels(9)	Darling(19)	<i>Davis</i> (4)
Dean(1)	Dennis(4)	<i>Dimick</i> (4)	<i>Dionne</i> (6)
<i>Donald</i> (1)	<i>Dow</i> (1)	Dugad(2)	Dunn(3)
Eastman(19)	<i>Edwards</i> (4)	Eggleston(3)	Emery(20)
Evans(12)	<i>Farmer</i> (2)	Fellows(2)	Fifield(7)
<i>Fitzgerald</i> (2)	Foley(1)	<i>Forrest</i> (1)	Foster(6)
Freer(4)	French(10)	Frost(20)	<i>Fulton</i> (1)
<i>Galvin</i> (1)	<i>Gandin</i> (3)	<i>Gardner</i> (1)	<i>Goodine</i> (4)
Goodwin(10)	Graham(4)	Hall(3)	Hanchett(5)
Harris(2)	Hart(7)	Haskell(9)	Hatch(14)
<i>Hay</i> (1)	Hayes(5)	Heath(5)	Helie(2)
<i>Hemaozapa</i> (1)	Henderson(6)	Hendry(2)	Hood(21)
<i>Hudson</i> (5)	<i>Hutchinson</i> (1)	<i>Ingram</i> (2)	<i>Jameson</i> (1)
<i>Johnson</i> (3)	Jones(2)	Keenan(6)	<i>Kennedy</i> (1)
Kittridge(1)	Knox(1)	<i>Lang</i> (1)	<i>Leet</i> (5)
Legare(12)	<i>Lentz</i> (1)	Lindsey(2)	<i>Lord</i> (1)
<i>Lowell</i> (1)	Lund(3)	Main(8)	<i>Marcau</i> (1)
<i>Markey</i> (2)	McAllister(2)	McCrillis(2)	<i>McDonald</i> (9)
McKay(1)	<i>McLam</i> (6)	McQueen(6)	Millis(2)
<i>Minor</i> (1)	<i>Morien</i> (1)	Morrison(11)	Morton(1)
Murray(1)	<i>Olson</i> (3)	Orr(1)	Page(43)
<i>Parker</i> (2)	Pierce(4)	Pillsbury(8)	Plummer(1)
<i>Pomeroy</i> (1)	Puffer(4)	Purcell(1)	<i>Putnam</i> (2)
<i>Randall</i> (1)	Renfrew(6)	Ricker(26)	<i>Roberts</i> (1)
<i>Robinson</i> (2)	<i>Rowe</i> (1)	Saunders(2)	<i>Sayers</i> (5)
<i>Scott</i> (1)	Secchiari(3)	<i>Shatney</i> (2)	<i>Shepard</i> (10)
Smith(15)	<i>Snow</i> (4)	<i>Somers</i> (2)	<i>Strong</i> (1)
Taisey(5)	<i>Thompson</i> (1)	Thurston(9)	<i>Tillotson</i> (2)
Vance(13)	Welch(42)	Wheeler(4)	White(7)
Whitehill(9)	Williams(19)	Wilson(2)	<i>Wright</i> (7)
Wrinkle(1)			

There were 59 new family names in the 1930 census and 60 family names that were in the 1920 census are missing. (34 of the 60 were only listed in the one (1920) Groton census.) Family names with

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10 or more individuals in 1930 were Page 43, Welch 42, Ricker 26, Carpenter 21, Emery and Frost 20, Darling, Eastman and Williams 19, Smith 15, Hatch 14, Vance 13, Evans and Legare 12, Morrison 11, and Bailey, Blanchard, Brown, French, Goodwin and Shepard 10 each. These 21 family names accounted for 46 % of Groton's population in 1930 (366 of 803).

In addition to the 59 new family names and 60 who left many other individuals came and went between censuses. Groton was changing from a farming, logging, manufacturing and shipping center to a rural community whose citizens traveled to nearby population centers for employment. The Page Chain company was one of the last manufacturing firms operating in town and it closed in 1934 shortly before the death of owner Sewell Page. The creamery near the iron bridge on the Powder Spring road was still making butter and cream from milk supplied by local farmers. Wilbur Carbee and the Hosmer Brothers sold cemetery monuments and did lettering and cleaning in the slowing granite business. Rickers sawmill was still operating with a dwindling timber supply. Farming was changing from primarily dairy herds producing milk to chickens producing eggs. Lorimer Puffer and Gerald Morse raised chicks to supply the local farmers with poultry in addition to having large operations themselves. George Welch collected eggs from the farmers and transported them to the Boston market.



Lee Blanchard's Store on Main street in 1932

WORLD WAR II STORIES – PART VI

Adrift at sea in a life boat—400 miles from nearest land

By Captain Dwight A. Smith (1888 – 1962)

Captain Smith's report on the last voyage and sinking of his ship, West Kebar, in 1942 by a German Submarine was in the last two issues of the GHS newsletter. This part of his story describes their adventure after the Sub left them adrift in the Atlantic Ocean.

The time was around nine O'clock, or a bit later, October 29, 1942 and we were in a small boat (28 feet in length) with 35 people, bobbing up and down in the darkness and rain, adrift in the Atlantic Ocean about 400 miles from the nearest land, Barbados Island. As soon as I was certain the Sub was not returning I had the oars manned and made an attempt to again take the raft in tow. We were unsuccessful because darkness and the unorganized crew made rowing impossible.

The three deck officers were assigned to watches of two hours length, their principal duty was to handle the steering oar, the rudder had been smashed beyond repair going along side the sub, and to have the oars manned whenever necessary to bring the boat's head to the sea. The sea had become steadily rougher and it was essential to keep the boat from getting even partly broadside to it, because if this happened the danger of becoming filled with water or capsizing would be very acute.

At frequent intervals during the night a light was flashed towards the life raft, and those on the raft would flash in answer, but as the night wore on it became quite evident that the raft was getting further away. By daylight it was about a full mile away. Shortly after daybreak on the 30th all oars were manned, no person being exempt from a turn excepting the officers on steering watch and Mrs. Fowler. The men on the raft got out their paddles and tried to shorten the gap, but to no avail, it was wider by sunset than at sunrise, at least another mile. For an hour before dark the raft could be seen only when both it and the boat were on top of a sea at the same time. Because of the breeze and the rough sea (for a small boat) we had to have the sea anchor rigged out all of the 30th, that night and the next forenoon until the attempt was given up, and sail set on a course taking the boat in the opposite direction.

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About 10 A.M. on the 31st I was fully convinced that to continue in the endeavor to reach the life raft would only result in failure, and would likely mean the loss of not only the eight men on the raft but also the 35 souls in the boat. I therefore made the heartbreaking decision to abandon the attempt and leave the men on the raft to whatever fate had in store for them. I set the boat on a course for the nearest land; Barbados Island, about 400 miles WSW. Orders were given to step the mast (erect it) and set sail, but not before I made known my decision and the reasons for it. These met with the full approval of my officers and all the others in the boat.

I must say that up to this time and for another two or three days a goodly percentage of the boat's company were far too sea-sick, apathetic, or both to show much interest in anything but their own miseries. A few were very sick for a day or so, and then slowly recovered until they were quite normal; as normal as they could be under the circumstances, while others were exceedingly sick for as many as five of the ten days spent in the boat. Mr. Carter, the Third Officer, and myself were the only members of the company untouched at any time by the malady. The majority of the seasick victims became really hardened small boat sailors as soon as their recovery was complete.

On the morning of October 30th, before I issued the first rations, I gave a talk on the situation which we faced; the distance to nearest land, weather expected this time of year (a mixture of hot days with burning sun and rainy cold nights), likelihood of rescue and probable number of days in the boat barring a rescue, necessity of strict rationing of both food and water, for each one to remain calm and feel assured that reaching land safe and sound was a certainty, and try to overlook any of the many slight irritations arising.

I then promised a reward of Ten Dollars in U.S. currency (having been fortunate to bring off the ship \$216.00) to the person first sighting a ship or aircraft resulting in our rescue, or sighting of land or land lights, which would also mean an end to the boat trip. No one needed the incentive of a monetary reward to make them keep a sharp and constant lookout, but I figured the offer would buoy the spirits of all. It had that effect. About 9:30 AM on November 2nd a plane was sighted to the north (by Mr. McQueen), which caused all hands to be very much elated, but when within about two miles it turned and very shortly disappeared, our feelings were anything but those of elation. Again that day another plane (or the same one) was sighted to the south and acted the same way with an increasing dampening effect on the boat's company. The second plane was also sighted by McQueen, who apparently had unusually keen eye sight, and it looked like he would win the

reward, but lost out to an A. B. (Able Bodied) Seaman Velez (nicknamed "Lucky" after being rescued from the stove-in lifeboat), who first sighted a flashing light on Barbados the night of November 6th.

We were disappointed again, about 11 AM November 5th when a tanker was sighted heading west. Our course was altered to meet her, and hopes ran high as more and more of her came above the horizon, flares were made in readiness and a huge yellow flag flown from the masthead. Around Noon when the distance separating us was about 2.5 miles the tanker abruptly altered course to the south, and within a short time was below the horizon.

That was a hard blow to each of us, because having been a full week in the boat we certainly were hoping and praying that at last it was to end with a rescue vessel close at hand. In spite of our disappointment we had no hard feelings against the tanker's crew, because we realized her situation was vastly different than the plane's, and whenever a surface craft undertakes to get close to a boat on the open sea it is running a definite risk of finding out too late a lurking submarine is using the boat as a decoy. The balance of that day was not marked by many signs of cheerfulness, although I made a determined effort to ease things by going into details as to how fortunate we were to be adrift in the Tropics instead of a couple thousand miles further north, that making a land fall was but the matter of two or three days, and even if Barbados was missed another two days added would certainly bring us to either St. Lucia or Grenada, those two islands being but 60 to 100 miles to the west of Barbados.

Sometime before this, signs had become more frequent and clearly evident that the breaking point was slowly but surely approaching for some of the boat's company. About November 3rd I discovered that 2 members of the ship's crew and 2 male passengers had been supplementing their drinking water ration by using sea water. This is one thing greatly to be feared, as it is certain to create an overpowering thirst, one that can never be satisfied, and almost always ends by the victim becoming crazed and either dying in agony or jumping overboard and drowning. I also found that these men who had been drinking sea water told their shipmates they only did so because they were becoming constipated. To prevent any further acts of this nature I made a short speech on the inescapable danger attending it, had a search made for anything resembling drinking cups (found one), which when found was taken into my personal custody, and wound up the talk by making a very definite promise to use physical violence on the next culprit. I furthermore went into details regarding the matter of constipation, pointing out a failure to have bowel movements was to be expected, because rations eaten were so

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1930's Photos



Civilian Conservation Corps camps were established
In Groton State Forest in the 1930's for unemployed
Men between 17 and 23 years of age.



The 1938 Hurricane did considerable damage.



Children's parade in Groton at the
Wells River Valley Fair



Mrs. Tillotson with her pupils at the village school.

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highly concentrated that all waste had been pre-eliminated, leaving any still remaining to be taken care of by the bladder and urine. Another phenomenon met with was the gradual deepening of the urine color (dark red or brown), and this likewise could be ignored.

After this there was no further drinking of sea water. To make very certain that our water supply would not be tampered with during the hours of darkness the spigot was replaced by a bung plug firmly driven in place after each issue of drinking water, the spigot being then turned over to me. The rations, in heavy metal containers located in the most crowded part of the boat (waist) and the difficulty of opening the screw lids, were in no danger of pilferage.

Rations were issued each morning between 9:00 and 9:30 O'clock, followed by 2 ounces of water, and again the latter part of the afternoon. The time of the afternoon issue was governed by the weather, that is, if the indications were of good weather the issue was made in just sufficient time to complete the water ration before dark came upon us, but if (as was the case on the majority of the days) indications showed we were to be drenched by a heavy rain the issue was made in time to complete the meal before the rain. Sometimes this didn't work out so well, the squall overtaking us with unexpected speed. When this happened every endeavor was made to supplement the water ration by catching rain in everything that could possibly be used as a container. The sail was lowered and the rain collected at the end of the rolls, a wooden paddle was utilized as a bailer, shoddy woolen blankets were rung out into mugs, cupped hands were held out to catch what their owner fondly considered a mouthful, singlets were removed and when well soaked were either squeezed out or sucked, while some became real adept at catching a steady trickle off their forearms.

For my own part I used my handkerchief, which was knotted at the corners and used as a turban during the daytime, holding it out in the palm of my hand loosely balled up, and squeezing it into my mouth as often as it became soaked, which was often. The water taken from the sail tasted oily and had an added flavor of paint, while that obtained from the blanket was to say the least filled with hairs. I don't know what flavor the singlets gave to the rain water. In spite of the many and varied flavors of the water obtained in the manners described we were thankful to be able to get it, and it went far to balance matters with the discomfort caused by the frequent heavy downpours.

.On days when the rain squalls waited until mid-forenoon before overwhelming us the mornings were really comfortable, dry enough that our scanty clothing could and did to some extent dry out, light breezes

helped us on our way, and we could for a short while partly forget that we were only castaways, life wasn't too hard. But it wouldn't be long before our insides told us just who and what we really were, thirst, hunger, and discomfort were all rearing their heads and insisting that something be done for them. Up to a certain point thirst and hunger could be appeased, but the discomfort got steadily worse, and harder to contend with. Because of extremely cramped quarters, hardest of hard seats (some with slats), impossibility of sitting in a normal position and at the same time finding a place on which to rest ones feet, and no way whatsoever of escaping the rain's downpour, or the burning rays of the tropical sun, the tempers of a group of usually normal humans slowly but surely reached the point where nothing matters but escape; and as soon as the fact that any escape is out of the question the brute instinct underlying the civilized crust comes to the front.

This is the time to be dreaded by those in the company being tested who are better fitted mentally and physically to stand up longer under the strain. About five days after the torpedoing the Chief Cook showed plain signs of either becoming insane, or developing undiscovered shrewdness. I am of the opinion it was the latter symptom he was bringing out. Two nights in succession he made what appeared to be attempts at suicide by drowning, jumping into the sea and being hauled back into the boat by his mates handiest to him. On both occasions the weather was fairly good, with not much sea running, and no wind, which means that the boat was making practically no headway through the water, simply rolling and pitching lazily. I had my own opinion regarding the man's real desire to drown himself, and these opinions were strengthened when I found that upon both occasions he held the lifeline (running alongside, and outside of the gunwale) with a sure grip until safely back inside once again. I made no comment on these aborted attempts on his own life, but did make the following remark a night later when someone in the forward part of the boat sung-out "The cook is standing up alongside the mast with a rope around his neck, and is going to hang himself"; "Let him go ahead and hang himself, and see if I give a damn." No further word came from that part of the boat for the rest of the night, from which I surmised that the cook had changed his mind. When daylight came I could see that the cook was still with us, quite alive, but not nearly as loquacious as formerly. For the rest of the time in the boat he remained quiet and subdued, and made no further efforts to create sympathy for himself.

He was the only one of 35 in the boat who at any time made any real or feigned attempt at self destruction, but signs were becoming only too apparent about the sixth day in the boat that at least five of the company

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would only be able to stand the strain another five or six days, before cracking up completely. The manner in which different ones reacted to issuing of rations, or to the approach of the time when it was due, varied in nearly as many different ways as there were persons receiving them. Some passed rations along to those being served first, another would handle it as if it was the last morsel of food, or drop of water left in the world, fearing to let go of it, while others were very pleasant about the whole thing, passing the ration on as if it was a real pleasure, and acting as if there was plenty more where that came from. A few of the company were prone to fill their entire conversation with food and drink in all its forms, keeping this up day and night until I was forced to order the offenders to confine their talk on this one all absorbing topic to their intimates, and to converse in low enough tones so anyone nearby would have to pay close attention to understand it.

Many times during these dark, and long nights it would be necessary to awake all hands in order to allow those on stand-by duty to man the oars, because either the wind had shifted slightly, or the steersman had let the boat come to, close to the wind, thereby spilling the sail and making it necessary to use oars to bring her back again. This operation really woke everybody up, because owing to the crowded condition of the boat there was but little room to handle oars, and those not engaged in manning them had to compress themselves even more than ordinary.

When the ship was abandoned the Second Officer managed to bring along his sextant and the Junior Third Officer a nautical almanac and a small notebook. These, with the charts (pilot) and pencil in a watertight cylinder always in the boat, and two wristwatches (one belonging to Mrs. Fowler, and one to the Purser) constituted our complete navigational equipment. By sighting across the boat compass with a small straight edged piece of wood at the rising or setting sun a fairly close check could be kept on the compass error, using in those latitudes, the daily declination as a true bearing. Every attempt was made to secure an observation for latitude, but because of cloudy or overcast skies at the time best suited for our crude attempts we were unsuccessful until November 3rd, Mr. Brown took the sights, supported by the Third Officer and Junior Third, (because without being firmly held he would have run a heavy chance of being pitched overboard), and after the sights were taken Mr. Carter would work them out while I prepared to plot the results on a pilot chart, in conjunction with a longitude arrived at by dead reckoning. Latitude computed from sights on November 3rd, 5th, and 6th gave us a fairly close approximation of our north and south position, but the exactness of our longitude by dead reckoning, using the boat's speed through the water as judged during daylight, was at the best a pure guess. I felt confident dur-

ing the passage that by making, what in my judgment was a proper allowance for drift, the boat would eventually arrive at Barbados Island.

On the evening of November 6th the boat was hove-to at 10:15 PM because of a squall approaching from leeward. About 11 O'clock the A. B. Seaman Velez very excitedly reported sighting a flashing light about one point on the starboard bow, which was exactly where it should have been if my calculations were anywhere near correct. The actual light was not to be seen owing to the boat being low in the water and such a distance away, but its path could very easily be seen at each sweep across the clouds, it being a very overcast sky. As soon as I was absolutely positive that we were actually looking at a light's loom and not at a dream I ordered the Steward to issue a full mug of water to everyone. This was a special occasion to be fittingly observed, and so by the pale gleam of the hurricane lantern we each had a drink that no millionaire's money could buy, and that no person on earth not situated as we were could begin to appreciate as we did that dirty mug of not too clean water.

I am sure on that night most of the castaways got more real sleep than during the entire time in the boat up to the sighting of the light. By early morning at 3:51 AM November 7th I set sail and we resumed our voyage feeling far happier than at any time since taking to the boat.

It was a long and anxious time, sailing before we could distinctly make out objects on the island, such as cane mill stacks, houses, ravines, and cultivated fields. It was well after dark by the time the boat brought the light abeam, about one mile away, and each person in the boat had his own mental picture of what he would be eating and drinking long before midnight and that real sleep in a real bed, not imagining for a moment that he still had one more night in the boat, one more night to spend thoroughly miserable and sorely disappointed.

All of our remaining rockets and flares were sent up at intervals, while the Radio Operator very busily sent countless S.O.S.'s and emergency calls by means of one of the flashlights, but all to no avail – no answering signal of any kind. All hands were again issued a full ration of water, which for some reason didn't at all taste anything like the mug full we had the night before when the light was first sighted

At daybreak on November 8th, the wind died out, and the boat proceeded under oars about half an hour when a Motor Torpedo Boat arrived at full speed. Oars were boated and one and all feasted their eyes on the most marvelous craft that ever floated, and in no time at all the boat was alongside and the "West Kebar" survivors at last realized they were safe.

GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Visit GHS Web page at Historical Society on <http://www.grotonvt.com/>

Lifetime Membership dues are \$100

Annual dues are \$10 for individuals and \$15 for families

Lifetime members		3
Annual members		85
Individuals		55
paid 2011+	34	
paid 2010	18	
paid 2009*	3	
Families		15
paid 2011	7	
paid 2010	4	
paid 2009*	4	

+ two members have also paid ahead for 2012
* 2011 will end the Grace period for members who last paid dues for the year 2009. If dues are not paid by the end of this year their membership will lapse. (eleven members have elected to receive their newsletter by e-mail saving printing and mailing costs.)

Annual dues are payable each calendar year. The last year your dues were paid is shown on your mailing label. Please let us know if there is an error. Those receiving their newsletter by e-mail will be notified when they are in their grace period.

Saving Vermont's Treasures campaign of the VT Historical Society will create 3 new gallery spaces for rotating exhibitions at the VT History Center in Barre, allowing visitors to explore Vermont's heritage through the Society's collections. Mark Hudson, VHS executive director said "For years, people have been asking us to display more artifacts, and now we will be able to do so."

Are your family Bible records, diaries, journals, letters, wills, deeds, and photographs going to be available for future descendants to read and learn about their ancestors? With the passing of each generation more and more family history documents become damaged, mislaid or lost. Sometimes valuable family information is handed down to individuals who are not particularly interested in it at the time, and it becomes harder and harder for others to retrieve it in later years if it is stored in someone's attic or basement. The Groton Historical Society is collecting and preserving family records to make them available for those interested in researching their family history.

One hundred fifty years ago on April 12, 1861 at 4:30 a.m. a single mortar round was fired on Fort Sumter, SC, and the Civil War began. By the time it ended in 1865, about 620,000 soldiers' lives had been lost, and America had changed. Sixteen of those who died were from Groton, including William Scott who is remembered in history as the 'Sleeping Sentential' pardoned by President Abraham Lincoln after being sentenced to be shot for sleeping on duty. He volunteered to stand a second consecutive night on watch for a sick comrade when he was caught sleeping and Court Marshaled. After he was pardoned he died of wounds in the battle at Lees Mills, VA on April 16, 1862.



The Groton Web page can be easily accessed with this QR code hyperlink. Just scan it with your smart phone camera using a free QR app. From the Groton Town home page you can go to several other sites including the Historical Society home page and read back issues of the GHS Newsletter and current news about the Society.

Heritage Preservation's MayDay campaign encourages organizations to protect the art, artifacts, records and historic sites they hold in trust.

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