The Hardest Duty
1st Sergeant William W. Durgin and the Lincoln Funeral Train

By John and Liz McCann

Headquarters 10th Regiment
April 20, 1865
Veterans Reserve Corps
Special Order Number 88

Pursuant to orders from Headquarters, 1st Brigade Veteran Reserve Corps requiring four First Sergeants should be selected with reference to their age, length of service and good soldierly conduct for escort duty to the remains of President Lincoln to Springfield, Illinois.

1st Sergeant William W. Durgin of Company F 10th Regiment V.R.C. is hereby detailed for that duty and will report to Capt. McCamly 9th Regiment Vet. Res. Corps at Camp Frye at 9:00 o’clock A.M. this day.

By command of
Major George Bowers
Commanding Regiment

Thus began the final military duty of one of Maine’s longest serving Civil War soldiers. Sgt William W. Durgin, late of Stoneham and soon to return to North Lovell, accompanied Abraham Lincoln’s body from that day until the fallen President was interred in his tomb in Springfield, Illinois. This journey traced in reverse the path the President had travelled en route to Washington DC upon his election four years earlier. During this two-week odyssey, the train travelled through 180 cities and 7 states. Along the way it is estimated that 1/3 of the population of the United States saw the train or passed by Lincoln’s coffin; more than 12 million people. It wouldn’t be until the advent of television that more people observed one single event. Sgt Durgin was with the President for the entire journey. His Civil War journey, though, began long before.

On April 24th, 1861, 11 days after the fall of Ft. Sumter and the start of the Civil War, one of Durgin’s neighbors showed him the Waterford paper which said that Captain George Beal of Norway was organizing a company for Maine’s 1st Volunteer Regiment in Norway. Durgin and his friend walked the 20 miles to Norway and enlisted the next day. The 1st Maine Regiment never left Maine; like many of the original Civil War regiments it was called into service for only 90 days. The optimism that the war would be a
From the President

This summer we plan to have some exciting events that we hope you will not miss.

On Monday evening, June 30th, we will have our Annual Dinner at Ebenezer’s Pub. This is a fun evening, and we hope to see you there.

We will host our 15th annual Antique Show and Auction on July 13th. Antique dealers, including some new participants, are presently reserving space. We are gathering a fine selection of auction items and any contributions you would like to make would be greatly appreciated. We are also looking for items to sell in our Antique Shop and will gladly accept your donations.

Four weeks later we will present our first Garden Tour. The event will be held on the afternoon of August 10th, and should prove to be both enjoyable and unique. The logistics are still be figured out, but if you would like to assist in any fashion please let us know. We are presently lining up both flower and vegetable gardens, and would love suggestions.

Thanks to the generosity of one of our members, this summer will also signify a milestone for our organization. For eight weeks we will have the assistance of a paid intern. Applications are being accepted until April 15th and for more information go to the home page of our web site.

Once again, I want to thank all of our donors and volunteers. Over the last few years, the Society has been very fortunate to receive many contributions in the form of volunteer work, additions to our collection, and your financial generosity. Please remember we depend upon all of these contributions and welcome them in whatever form.

Best wishes, Catherine Stone

A History of West Lovell

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THE LOVELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MISSION
The Lovell Historical Society exists to collect and preserve historical and genealogical records, property, and artifacts, and to encourage and support interest in and study of the history of the Town of Lovell and its environs. Its collections are available for consultation by its members and other interested parties. In fulfillment of its educational mission, the Society presents public programs on relevant topics, publishes documents and the results of research, maintains an archive, a library and a museum, provides information and guidance to interested researchers, and collaborates with libraries, schools, and other organizations to carry out historical projects.

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LOCATION AND HOURS
The Society, located on Route 5 in the 1839 Kimball-Stanford House, is open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9am to 4pm, Saturdays from 9am to 12pm and by appointment. All are welcome to visit our museum and research collections. Business meetings are open to all members and are held at 2pm every other month at specified dates. Our phone number is (207) 925-3234 or (207) 925-2291. Our collection can be viewed at our web site—www.lovellhistoricalsociety.org—and our email address is lovellhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.
quick one was soon dashed. Upon being released from service with the 1st Maine Regiment, Durgin promptly joined 9th Maine Infantry, an outfit with a three year term of service.

Although the 9th Regiment was an army unit, they were used in support of a naval strategy to limit the South’s ability to receive supplies and support from abroad. Early in the war, the North was concerned that England would recognize the Confederacy and supply them with arms and other aid. While that never came to pass – England realizing that supporting a slave holding nation wouldn’t sit well with their own working class – the threat was real and even without official recognition many goods were smuggled into the South during the war. It was imperative that the North shut off, to whatever extent possible, the flow of materials into the South.

In March 1862, the 9th Regiment was part of the 10th Army Corps and made one of the first amphibious landings in US military history when it went ashore in Fernadina, Florida to capture this important seaport. By seizing southern ports, the US Navy was able to base ships to patrol off shore and enforce the quarantine of the South. It must have been quite the culture shock to go from the mountains of western Maine to the Florida coast. The area was remote, swampy, and malarial. It’d be fun to visit Fernadina Beach today; in 1862 it would have been a misery.

During his time in Fernadina, Sgt Durgin managed to have a cannon ball fall on his ankle. This seemingly minor injury worsened – in fact it bothered him to the end of his days – and in May 1863 he was discharged from the 9th Regiment and immediately joined the Invalid Corps. This Corps had been formed just the month prior and consisted of two classes of soldiers: partially disabled soldiers transferred to finish out their tour of duty; and disabled soldiers who wished to serve in some capacity but were no longer able to perform other than light military duty. Within a year, the name was changed to the more palatable Veteran Reserve Corps, which likely increased the number of soldiers interested in serving.

Sgt Durgin soon became the 1st Sergeant of Company F of the 10th Regiment, V.R.C. The Regiment performed garrison duty in the fortifications around Washington DC, freeing up more able bodied soldiers to serve in the field. It was unglamorous work, but necessary and important to the war effort. When Durgin’s tour of duty expired in 1864, he re-enlisted for three more years.

On the night of President Lincoln’s assassination on April 15th, 1865, he was at Camp Frye Barracks in Washington DC. He mustered with Company F for the funeral which was held four days later. As he later relayed: “My assignment to the Lincoln (funeral and) escort was of considerable surprise. I fell in with my company on the morning of the funeral and with them, along with thousands of other troops, marched down Pennsylvania Avenue and halted in front of the White House...While the Regiment waited in line, I heard a General asking a Colonel for a detail of

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men for the funeral. I heard the Colonel say “I guess this is the man for whom you are looking” referring to me. General Townsend detailed me to go into the White House with several men that had been selected. Once inside the White House I got the surprise of my life. General Townsend said, “You are to be one of the bearers.”

Here’s how another spectator described the scene inside the East Room of the White House that Sgt Durgin was soon part of: “About six hundred persons were admitted to the room, where the body lay, the head resting towards the north. From the entrance door at the northwest end of the room were placed the pall-bearers; next, the representatives of the Army; then the Judiciary: the Governors of the States; next, the Diplomatic Corps; the Judges of the Supreme Court; next, in the centre, and in front of the catafalque, stood the new President, Andrew Johnson.” One imagines the surprise Sgt Durgin must have felt at being unexpectedly put into such an august gathering at the last minute, and given such a vital role.

For the next 2 weeks, Sgt Durgin was in company with the body of the President and never more than a single rail car away from him. The official escort consisted of 25 sergeants (8 of whom, including Durgin, were the official pall bearers), eight generals and seven other officers. By order of the Secretary of War, there was never a moment through the entire journey when at least two members of the honor guard were not stationed alongside the President’s coffin.

During the journey, there were twelve official stops, where Sgt Durgin and the other pall bearers carried the President’s casket from the train to a hearse, and then accompanied the body to and from a funeral service. He said later that “I had occasion to see the immortal remains many times. (Often) the casket was open, (and) there was also a sealed glass slide. President Lincoln looked as natural as he did in lifetime when I met him….In Springfield, my comrades and I carried the casket to its final resting place and placed it in the tomb.”

In addition to the official stops and the final internment, there were a multitude of spontaneous events that occurred along the path of the train. Bonfires, floral arches, hand painted signs, and masses of people marked nearly every mile of the route. People would stand in the rain for hours just to see the train pass by and pay their respects to the fallen President. As the author James Swanson notes, the train became about much more than just one man. “Somewhere between Washington and Springfield, the train became a universal symbol of the cost of the Civil War. It came to represent a mournful homecoming for all the lost men. In the heartbroken and collective judgment of the American people, an army of the dead – not just its commander in chief – rode aboard that train.”

One hopes as well that the sentiment the President expressed in his second Inaugural Address, delivered just the month before, travelled with him as well. “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

Discharged in November 1865, William Durgin returned to western Maine and settled in North Lovell where he worked as a spool maker before purchasing 40 acres to raise livestock and farm. He was justifiably proud of his service, wearing the Congressional Medal he received as a member of the honor guard whenever he appeared in public. He drew a Civil War pension for his injured ankle, and lived to the age of 90, the last surviving member of the honor guard which carried the fallen President with such respect and dignity from Washington to his final resting place in his hometown of Springfield. Sgt Durgin’s own grave in the North Stoneham cemetery is included in the national register of Civil War monuments. It reads: “One of Abraham Lincoln’s bearers and escort to Springfield Illinois. Helped to place Remains in tomb.”
Waldo Nash Seavey (1883-1964) was a highly regarded Lovell surveyor in the first half of the twentieth century. He lived on Main Street in Lovell Village in the 1838 James Walker house and was known state-wide for a variety of noteworthy accomplishments. He was a State Senator and holder of several State offices. He was also an excellent athlete and was the Maine State trapshooting champion for nineteen years.

Waldo was born in Stow, ME on April 1, 1883, the son of James and Suzie Seavey. He was educated in Stow schools and graduated from Bridgton Academy and Westbrook Seminary. After graduating, he farmed and learned surveying under the tutelage of Ceylon Day (1844-1917). He married Louise Chandler (1885-1960) of North Chatham, NH in 1907 and they had two daughters—Herlene (1913-2004) and Louise (1919- ). While Herlene was born in Stow, Louise was born in Lovell. Her father had moved the family to Lovell Village just before her birth after taking a job operating the Dupont Mill in the Village.

Besides operating the mill, Waldo continued surveying, coached the Lovell baseball team, and pursued his love for hunting and trapshooting. It was during this time he gained his greatest notoriety as a trapshooter. His accomplishments were said to include the following: 1st to shoot 25 straight at skeets; 388 without a miss at traps; winner of all Maine events in 1931; and 8 state titles. His daughter Herlene enjoyed trapshooting with him, and one year won the ladies state championship.

Waldo began his political career in 1932, when he was elected State Senator from Oxford County. After one term in the Senate, he was appointed by Governor Brann to head the Civilian Conservation Corps. Next he was put in charge of the State Liquor Commission, after which he was appointed State Forest Commissioner in 1936.

The Seaveys retained their home in Lovell Village during Waldo’s political career and made occasional visits. In a letter to Charlotte Hobbs written in 1938, Waldo’s wife Louise sums up her feeling about living in the Augusta area: “Sometimes I wonder why God made the city & society. The more I see of the later, the more I feel like “sitting on a rock in the sun” and think

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more would be happier if they did. Society and politics help to make this world more sinful.” It certainly appears Louise would have preferred to be living in their home in Lovell.

In 1940, the family returned to Lovell Village. Herlene had married Charles A. Cotton in 1936 and did not accompany her parents, but Louise did. She married Frank Whidden two years later, at which time Waldo and his wife lived alone in the spacious home, which is still owned by the family.

Waldo returned to his surveying work. His family later reported that during his lifetime he had surveyed nearly one thousand tracts of land in southwestern Maine and nearby NH. He also served in various town positions—the Budget Committee for fourteen years and Trustee of the Town School Fund from 1945 until his death.

It was in 1946 that Waldo’s wife Louise was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. She spent the remainder of her life resting in bed, tended by Waldo and a housekeeper. During this time period, she wrote poetry and essays, many of which were published in the Norway Advertiser Democrat. She wrote several Easter poems, one of which follows and was published in 1952.

The rosey morning breaketh
Darkness from the night has fled
’Tis dawn, the tomb is empty
He is risen, He is not dead!
Snow white lillies open waxen petals,
The birds sing blithe and gay.
In my heart life springs anew
On this resurrection day.
What tho storms assail my pathway
Beating sorrow o’er my life?
Oh Savior, Thou art risen!
To dispel the gloom and strife.
Often dark clouds gather round me,
I am depressed o’er my sore loss.
Oh living Lord, take thou my hand
Teach me how to bear my cross.

Louise passed away on April 17, 1960, Easter Sunday. One year later, Waldo remarried Mary Louise Corning.

Waldo died on March 12, 1964 at the hospital in North Conway, NH. During his lifetime he had a distinguished career, both as a surveyor and as a politician. But it was his skill at trapshooting that placed him in sports history record books as the famous “Shooting-Star” of Maine. •••

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*Portland Sunday Telegram and Sunday Press Herald, December 29, 1946*
In Memoriam

We note with sadness the death of the following friends and neighbors:

**Corille (Grover) Bresette**, 62, of Lovell passed away on January 3, 2014. She was born in Lewiston, ME on September 1, 1951, the daughter of Rodney and Miriam Grover. She attended the University of Southern Maine and worked as a computer data processor, bookkeeper and accountant for Computer House, Cullinan Oil, and CN Brown. Corille was a member of this Society. She is survived by her husband Dexter, two children—Sean Starbird and Paige (Starbird) Coffin—five grandsons, one great-grandson, and several step-children.

**Ellen Margaret (Gerry) Ferguson**, 65, of Lovell passed away on March 4, 2014. She was born in Kearny, NJ on March 2, 1949 to Henry and Jane Gerry. She spent much of her life in Kearny, raising her family and vacationing in Lovell. She and her husband retired to their Heald Pond home seven years ago. Ellen is survived by her husband Danny and two children—Jesse and Jennifer.

**Albert S. Hammond**, 70, of South Paris, ME and formerly of Lovell died on January 16, 2014. Al was born in Hartford, ME on June 3, 1943, the son of Eldred and Julia Hammond. He attended school in South Paris and Buckfield and worked as a truck driver and mechanic. He was a race car driver, racing over 50 years at Oxford Plains Speedway and other tracks on the east coast. In 1971 he raced at Daytona International Speedway and had 91 career wins. In 2009 he was inducted into the Maine Motor Sports Hall of Fame. He was predeceased by a son Albert S., Jr. and is survived by his wife Delores, his son Ryan Kane, his step-daughter Stephanie Burnham, three grandchildren, and two step-grandchildren.

**Gardner “Pat” Norton**, 77, of Bridgton, ME passed away on January 15, 2014. He was born in Lovell on August 2, 1936, the son of Leewood and Lavina Norton. He was educated in Lovell schools and graduated from Fryeburg Academy. For forty years he worked for Central Maine Power, retiring as a line inspector. Pat was a member and past master of Oriental Lodge No. 13, a member of Royal Arch Masons Chapter No. 29, and honorary director of Pine Tree Steer and Ox Association. He was a Fryeburg Fair trustee and show steer superintendent for many years. He is survived by his wife Eleanor and daughter Melissa.

**Jeffery Souza**, 66, of Lovell died on March 29, 2014. He was born in Fall River, MA, the son of John and Dorothy Souza. Jeff was a carpenter in Maine and New Hampshire for the past 35 years. He is survived by his daughter Cassidy and two step-sons—Matt Souza and Robert Claffey.
Gifts and Donations

We are very grateful for the following gifts received since the last newsletter: Martha Barrow—permission to scan photo; Donald Chandler—Lovell Village Garage sign; Jennifer Davey—permission to scan photos; Larry & Bonnie Fox—permission to scan photos, two Boy Scout Troop 153 record books from 1951 through 1954; Al & Jacky Stearns—1948 Eighth Grade graduation program from Annie Heald School; Dennis Turner—permission to scan photo; Tooty Wilson—repair of braided rug, Priscilla Tatting Book edited by Jessie M. DeWitt.

Donations for the purchase of oil have been gratefully received from: Robert & Kathy Booth; Ray & Peggy Fisher; Peter & Cary Fleming; Jane Gleason; Rev. Alison Jacobs; Charlotte Lee; Dave & Peg Mason; Jack & Susan Rossate; Wing Family Partnership.

Cash donations have been gratefully received from: Katherine Armstrong (in memory of Carol Armstrong); John & Esther Atwood; John & Karen Bacchiocchi; Robert & Kathy Booth (in memory of Robert Chiarelllo and Raymond Sphires); John & Carolyn Farquharson; Peter & Cary Fleming; Elmer Fox; Jane Gleason; Elinor Goodwin; Collier Hands; Jeff Harmon; Jay & Jean Hunter; Ford & Patsy Hutchinson; Hollie Magee; Philip & Phyllis Marsilius (in memory of Robert Chiarelllo); C. Wayne Martin; Dave & Peg Mason; Barbara McAllister; William & Janet Nichols; Frederic Sater; Nicholas Skinner; Lt. Gen. George & Zoe Trautman; Betty Webster.

If you have made a donation or given an artifact or other form of historical material and it has not been listed here or previously noted, please contact us immediately. We appreciate the thoughtful generosity of our members and friends, and most certainly want to acknowledge and list gifts properly.

The Lovell Historical Society
P.O. Box 166
Lovell, ME 04051

If your mailing label doesn’t say “6-15” or “Life”, it is time to join or renew your membership. Thanks!