

MY COUNTRY



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- To promote awareness and significance of past events
- To produce a better-informed electorate
- To welcome voluntary submission of historical manuscripts
- To inspire patriotism that accepts diversity, without factionalism, and recognizes the necessity to work towards the common good.

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The Adventurous Life and Mysterious Death of Captain Crayton Holcomb

by Carol Laun

A young boy in West Granby, like many boys, dreamed of a life of travel, adventure and wealth. He had a yearning for the sea - a rather incongruous dream for a farmer's son in northern Connecticut. And yet, this boy's life was as exciting as any novel.

Crayton Philo Holcomb was born 24 Jan. 1830, nearly a year after his parents were married. His mother, Betsey Messenger, was only 17, and his father, Virgil Holcomb, was 22.

Both the Holcomb and the Messenger families had been in Granby since the late 1600s. Thomas Holcomb came to America in 1630 and fathered a large and prolific family. The progenitor of the Messenger clan was Andrew Messenger, who was in Boston by 1640.

The young couple first lived on a farm in the Day Street-Creamery Hill Road area. Four more children were born: Nelson Virgil in 1833, Newton Jay in 1835, Rhoda M. in 1840, and Arlesta Betsey in 1845. Shortly after Arlesta's birth, Virgil died at the age of 38. His gravestone in West Granby is inscribed, "weep not for me." The young widow was quickly married again in 1847 to Timothy Dean of Higley Road. They had a daughter Ruth in 1848.

Even before Virgil died, the family had financial problems. As Crayton once wrote to his sister, "*I went away to live when I was 7 years old and I never heard that anybodies heart was broken over it.*" It was not

uncommon for young children to live away from home and do chores for their keep. They were sent to school and could visit their families on Sundays.

In 1845, when Crayton was 15, he was apprenticed to Truman Allen until the age of 21. Allen operated a boot and shoe factory near his home at 10 Wells Road. According to the terms of his apprenticeship, Crayton was to receive sums increasing by a few dollars every year, to a grand total of \$157.50 for six years. He would also receive his boots and shoes, three months of schooling, and an additional \$50 when he was 21.

This paper may have provided the incentive for Crayton to run away to sea. Or perhaps the death of his father, and a stepfather he didn't like, hastened his departure. He must have signed on a whaling ship around 1846 or 1847 as a "greenhand," using an assumed name. Although no proof of this has been found, there is proof that he was an experienced sailor on his next voyage. He used an alias on that voyage also. Since most whaling trips lasted 3 or 4 years, it is logical to assume that Crayton first shipped out around 1846.

Crayton was visiting his family in Granby in 1850, because he was listed in the census, as a sailor age 20. When he returned to New Bedford, his cousin Harris Holcomb went with him. Both signed on the whaler *Braganza* under assumed names, since they were still under 21. Crayton wrote his mother, "*direct your letter to George Yates, Ship Braganza.*" The crew list of the *Braganza* has George Yates, 20, light complexion and sandy hair, from Brooksville, Maine, and Robert Harris, 20, from Granby, Connecticut. The voyage lasted 4 years, although the disenchanting

Harris jumped ship in Honolulu in 1852.

According to letters written by Harris Holcomb (who really wanted to go to the gold fields of California) Crayton was a steerer on the whaling boat that got the most whales, a man who learned navigational skills during the voyage, and a man respected by both the officers and crew of the *Braganza*. Crayton was an intelligent and very ambitious young man.

Crayton finally sailed under his own name in 1854, when he took out his citizenship papers (as protection against impressment by other nations). He served as 2nd mate on the *Chandler Price* from 1854 to 1857, and then on the same ship as Master (or Captain), 1857 to 1862.

Between the two voyages of the *Chandler Price*, Crayton probably visited his family again. His sister Rhoda, age 16, had married 21 year old Manuel Gutierrez, a Spanish cigar maker, in 1856. In April of 1857, Rhoda and her infant daughter both died of scarlatina. Two years later, 14 year old Arlesta Holcomb ran off to Granville, Massachusetts to marry her former brother-in-law.

The visit of the daring seafarer to somnolent West Granby, evidently caused both Nelson and Newton to succumb to the lure of the sea. When Crayton returned to New Bedford, his brothers went with him. Nelson signed on Crayton's ship as a greenhand. Newton Jay (calling himself Jay Newton) signed on the schooner *Java* out of Fairhaven, also as a greenhand.

Newton Holcomb never returned home. The log of the schooner *Java* described his death by drowning in 1859. The ship was anchored near the island of Brava, in the Cape Verde Islands. Apparently, Hol-

comb was attempting to run away. He fell out of a small boat and probably drowned because he was wearing "3 thick out side shirts, 1 undershirt, 2 pair thick pants, 1 pair of drawers, 1 pair of overhauls, a blue drilling frock, cap, shoes and stockings" in preparation for this escape from the ship. Obviously, the adventure of going to sea quickly lost its charm for Crayton's relatives.

Crayton's letters were infrequent in the early years. He wrote in 1850 and again in 1852 from the *Braganza*. Then there was a 12 year gap between letters when he sailed on the *Chandler Price*. Opportunities to send mail on a whaling voyage were few, and letters may have been lost either in the Pacific or in Granby.

In August 1862, Crayton was home again, buying 30 acres of farmland in West Granby for \$700, for his mother and his reckless step-father. This was a pattern repeated over and over again in the family. Crayton felt responsible for providing a home for his mother, and the entire family looked to him for financial aid, and to solve their problems.

The following month, Crayton signed on as Mate on the bark *Jireh Swift*. Nelson probably came home with his brother in 1862, but he went back whaling for one more voyage. He sailed with a Russian Company in 1863, and was with Crayton in Honolulu the following year.

In letters to his mother and Arlesta written Jan. 1864, Crayton compiled a woeful list of "worse damd luck" on this ship. They had taken little oil, another ship ran into them off Hawaii and broke their mast, a black "contraband from Washington" set fire to the ship, and then they dragged their anchors and hit

the wharf - total \$20,000 in damages.

Crayton was also very angry that his "born tired" stepfather Tim, had sold the horse Crayton left with them. He was sure they were cheated by dealing with Uncle Amasa Holcomb who "is a gambler and a cheat" unless he had "taken compashion on your egnoronce which I am loth to believe he would be so guilty of."

The bad luck of the *Jireh Swift* continued. It was captured and burned by the Confederate Raider *Shenandoah* in 1865. The *Shenandoah*, captained by James Waddell, scuttled or burned over 35 ships in less than 3 months of raiding in the Pacific.

On June 22, she captured the *Susan Abigail*, a trading vessel, and the whalers *Milo*, *Sophia Thornton*, and *Jirah Swift*, all of New Bedford. The *Milo's* master agreed to carry all the prisoners to San Francisco and was released on bond. The rest of the ships were burned. Captain Waddell refused to believe the whalers who told him that the war was over. Crayton Holcomb was returned to San Francisco without a ship and without a job.

During the next few years, Crayton made at least three more trips back to Granby. In 1865 he paid \$1600 for a house and six acres (now 15 Simsbury Road) for his mother. Two years later he saw a lawyer in Hartford and made a will leaving his West Granby property to his mother and then to his sister Arlesta.

After his 1867 visit home, Crayton returned to the West coast overland via Omaha and Montana. He faced a journey over mountains with more trepidation than any sea voyage. He wrote his mother from New York about the chest he was sending home. He wanted his clothes mended and other items stored

until his next visit. His brother Nelson was back in Granby, because Crayton said, "*don't let Nelson have them to scater all over the neighborhood.*" He also arranged to send \$200 to his mother from San Francisco, and asked her to give the "*Polar bearskin*" in the chest to Mr. C.E. Viets. (Probably Chauncey E. Viets)

Crayton had a very successful whaling voyage in 1868, earning about \$4000. He wrote of possibly making his home in California and investing in real estate. He was in command of the *Page*, "*a fine vessel*" the following year, and wrote to his mother from Sitka, Alaska. He was in good spirits, optimistic about his future, and generous to his family.

In 1870, Crayton made his last trip to West Granby. His brother Nelson, a farm laborer, had married Susan Speedman, from Ireland, in 1869. They had a month old baby named Betsey. Arlesta and Manuel had four children, a son Manuel, and daughters Florence, Nora and Nellie. The census for that year listed Crayton Holcomb, 40, Sea Captain, in the home of Timothy and Betsey Dean. He also brought his family another four acre parcel in West Granby, with buildings, for \$700.

On the "*bitter cold day*" he left New York, he traveled back to San Francisco by sea with Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester Parmelee, who were moving from West Granby to California. He also tried to help his brother-in-law, Manuel Gutierrez, market his cigars in California through Louis Matick, who was "*perfectly reliable*" and honest - a mistake in judgement that would come back to haunt him.

Through the 1870s, letters came to West Granby from Tahiti, San Francisco, Nagasaki, Hong Kong,

Borneo, and other exotic ports. Obvious improvement in both his spelling and grammar indicated that Crayton was still educating himself. He wrote about his family, Granby friends, and his fluctuating financial status. He never mentioned personal friends, and told nothing of any danger or adventures. He often described the beauty, fine climate, and easy life on the Islands. In only one letter to Arlesta, did he playfully touch on his private life.

"I have been on a good time in San Francisco for about two weeks and have come here (Stockton, CA) to correct my morals and get away from disipation. So you see I can be good sometimes. You spoke to me about a name for your girl. Now you must know that girls are of small account to me and something I take but little interest in."

He continued the same letter in a more serious vein, *"I somehow dread going to sea again, as I have got about tired of drifting around the world. Sometimes I feel like coming home, but oftener like going to some island in the Pacific and suning myself beneath the green groves of fruit and flowers that grow there, as it is a life of easy indolence that would suit me to a charm."*

But a few weeks later he was on the schooner *Sarah* heading for China and Japan for a six month voyage. He set out on each voyage with high hopes of getting rich, but *"did not have very good luck last voyage"* was a constant refrain. His life was a series of ups and downs, good luck quickly followed by bad.

Upon his return to San Francisco, Crayton became the Master and 1/4 owner of the 80 ton schooner *Scotland* for \$3000. He was to sail for the coast of Japan and possibly sell the vessel there. In 1872, he wrote

from Nagasaki, Japan that he had a good summer's work, but bad weather and damage to the ship of \$2800 took all the profits. *"I am growing old, almost 43, and I am no nearer satisfied with my success in life than I was 20 years ago."*

The following year, Crayton had sold his cargo in Hong Kong and chartered his vessel to go to Borneo. He wrote a wonderfully descriptive letter about the *"farthest place in the world from civilization."*

"This is a beautiful country, one of the most beautiful in the world. I have been up some of the rivers where the trees overhung the stream, covered with creeping vines full of flowers and birds of the most gorgeous plumage, and the air was vocal with their music. All kinds of fruit that will grow in warm latitudes grow here, such as plantains, oranges, mangoes, jack fruit and dozens of other kinds that I cannot think of and could not pronounce if I could. There is game here for the sportsman from the Elephant down to the rabbit, including the India buffalo, Deer, bear, wild hog, and monkey and Gorilla. There is to be obtained here for trade, mother-of-pearl shell, beeswax, camphor, gum, India rubber, Bech-de mer, and edible birds nest. Besides some Pearls, I have got nearly a cargo on board and in a few days shall start for Hong Kong if the Pirates leave us alone, for I must tell you that in some places the natives are not over scrupulous and would make no bones of capturing us if we were not on our guard. They are a fierce savage set of people and have the name of being very treacherous."

In June 1874, Crayton was still trading in Hong Kong. He wrote a letter to his sister rhapsodizing about the easy life in the South Seas. *"I have been to the Pellew Islands and on to the coast of New Guinea*

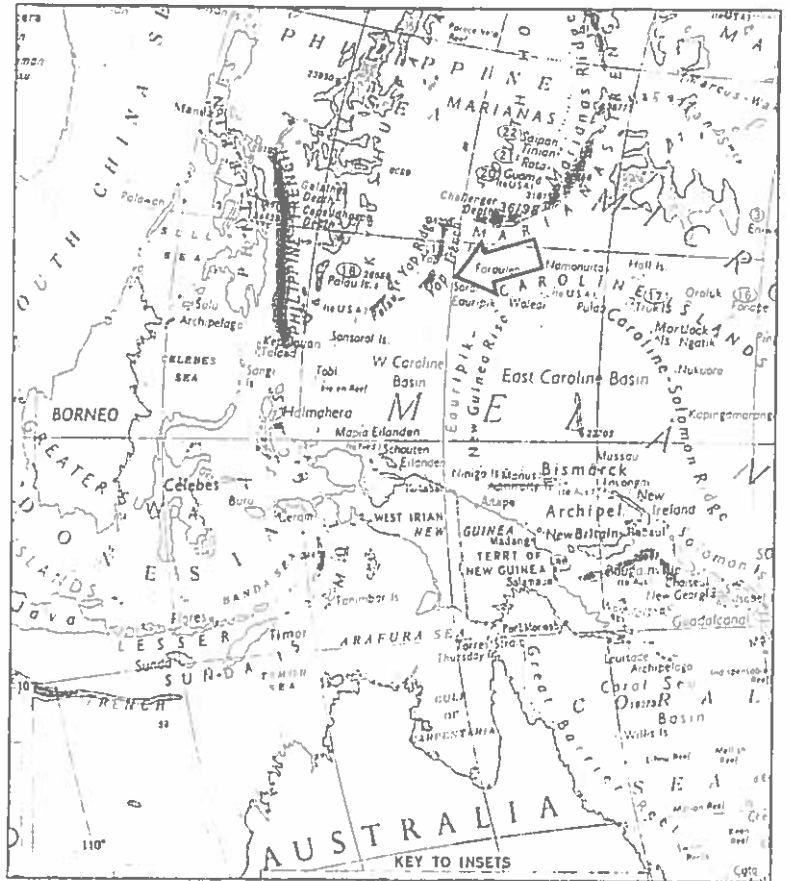
where the natives go nearly naked and appear to enjoy life as well as the fashionables of New York. Where the earth produces all that is required to sustain life without labor, and where although it is sometimes warm, there is never any cold to freeze a person. Where that fruit is always in season and is free to all. This is the land that suits me and I dread coming home to the frozen regions of New England."

Arlesta wrote of family problems and wanted Crayton to come home. There was sickness in Granby, and Nelson was drinking to excess. Crayton's reply was a little testy at always being expected to solve family troubles. He said his life was not an easy one, that he worked hard, and he reminded Arlesta that he had given them a home. As always, he promised a visit home "*if I am successful on my next voyage.*"

Sometime during 1874 or 1875, Crayton built himself a home on the island of Yap. He took charge of a vessel, the *Rabeah*, that mutineers had sailed to the area, took it to Admiralty Court, and purchased it for himself. He also met Bartola Garrido of Guam, a passenger on the hijacked vessel, who fell in love with the brave captain. He may have married her, or perhaps they just lived together. Not a word of this was mentioned in letters to West Granby.

At the same time, Captain David Dean O'Keefe, an American adventurer, was also living on Yap, on Tarang Island. He fled the States in 1870 with the police after him on a murder charge. He was a very successful trader, often called the "King of Yap". Holcomb must have known him, but he was never mentioned in any letters.

Crayton next got involved with an ill-fated scheme to salvage the Pacific Mail Steamship *Japan*, that



Map of Yap

had burned early in 1975 in Hai Moun Bay. He had nothing but problems - 6 weeks of bad weather so no one could dive, he had to stay over the wreck to protect his rights, and he had trouble with the divers as the water was 120 feet deep with strong currents. He felt the prospect was poor that he would make any money, and he was right. If he failed, Crayton said he would go back to the *"little cottage upon the Islands where money is of no value and all men are rich."*

Crayton frankly admitted that he was "in love" with the Islands. He told Arlesta that he would not come home until he had some money, and that he was trying to save up for his old age. He added that he had no family to fall back on, but it wasn't his fault, "*as the women all refused me.*" Crayton was not about to tell his family about Bartola.

1876 brought another plea from Arlesta to come home. Their mother was ill and Nelson refused to pay rent for the farm. Crayton replied that he was sorry but could do nothing. He had not been successful, and had lost all the money he made on a voyage in 1875. He did not have the \$450 it cost to go home. His fortunes took another drop in September of 1876, when the *Scotland* was lost in the Sea of Okhotsk. Crayton had sent it on a voyage with the Mate in command. He mourned that he had given four years of his life to that vessel.

Crayton wrote a rare letter to his brother Nelson in June 1877, "*for fear we might forget each other.*" He had been told that his stepfather Tim died of fever in October 1876, and worried that their mother would be lonely.

"When I left home I did not expect to be away so long, but I have had such hard luck. I have lost in my speculations and by the loss of the 'Scotland' and by the failure of parties here, about \$7000 within the past two years. This is all I have earned since I came to China. But I have a good prospect of recovering some of it this year. I have a good trading station or two among the Islands, and I am agoing to open more."

Crayton's hope for success as an Island trader sunk with his ship *Rabeah* in August 1877. The ship was under the command of the 1st mate and was lost with

all on board. A disconsolate Crayton said he was as poor as when he left West Granby, and he could not come home or send any money to the family. He planned to go back to Yap for another year.

Three years later, things were looking better for Crayton. He had purchased an island at Yap, Blalatch Island, with a causeway to the mainland. He expressed his regret to Arlesta that he was unable to return to see his aging mother, and added, *"I am doing very well at present, and one or two more years will see me able to return. Do not think that I am staying here because I like it, but for the reason that here I can earn something, and at home I should be miserable with your cold winters and abominable taxation. I have bought an Island at Guap and have my wharfs and store houses and everything complete. Only I have not you and my friends around me, but we can never get all we want in this world."*

In a letter to his mother, written a week or so later, Crayton went into detail about his financial position. *"I have made some money since I have been out here, but unfortunately I have lost a great part of it through the loss of my Schooner with all onboard. This was a great draw back upon me as the vessel and outfit of trade amounted to about \$9000. So that I was left as poor as when I left home, as I had no insurance on vessel nor cargo. I have still my station with Dwelling-house and outbuildings and a limited amount of trade. Say about \$3000 in property and \$1500 in hand."*

He mentioned the possibility of trying to sell his place in the Islands, but added, *"I can get a very good living and very easy, as I have no taxes to pay nor fashions to follow, and the finest climate in the world."*

Such a thing as coughs and colds are unknown to me." Crayton asked his family to write often, since steamers now arrived every four months. He told his mother it was *"the dearest wish of my heart to see you again. Although a rambler, I have always a thought of you lingering in my heart. I remain your affectionate son."*

In 1881, Louis Matick of San Francisco sued Crayton P. Holcomb for \$2000, and tried to get his money from the property Crayton owned in West Granby. Imagine the fear and panic felt by the widow Betsey, and her daughter Arlesta, at the thought of losing their home. Arlesta now had four children to support, and her husband, Manuel, was working as a cigar maker in New York City. Crayton heard about this in a letter from his cousin Harris.

Crayton responded quickly to his mother, and enclosed a power of attorney for her. *"I received a letter from Harris Holcomb about the first of June which is the first that I have heard from any one in the States for over three years, although I have written several times to you, to Arlesta & once to Nelson. It is with extreme surprise that I hear there has been an attachment put upon my property for a board bill, Horse-hire, and borrowed money. Now Mother, I never left a board bill nor a bill for Horse-hire unpaid in San Francisco in my life, and all these bills are fraudulent."*

Louis Matick was the business partner that Crayton considered *"perfectly reliable and honest"* ten years earlier. In a series of letters, Crayton painstakingly explained the circumstances of the debt claimed by Matick. Evidently, Crayton did borrow some money from Matick in 1872 when he bought a quarter share in the schooner *Scotland*, but *"I never received any value for the notes."*

The Captain's story reveals a tale of shady dealing and deception by the San Francisco con artists. Matick, and Sol Davis owned the schooner in partnership with a Gloucester owner with borrowed money. He was also asked to insure the vessel as security for his share. To avoid San Francisco taxes, they refused to put Crayton's name on the register as an owner, and pretended it was still a Gloucester boat.

He was promised a bill of sale as proof of ownership, when he provided the insurance policy. Instead, the agent for the vessel, C.L. Taylor, insisted on keeping both documents, saying they would send him the bill of sale when he reached Japan. The ship was ready to sail, and Crayton had no time to argue with his partners. Four years later, when the *Scotland* was lost, Crayton was told the insurance policy had lapsed. *"I never received any share of the earnings of the 'Scotland' nor wages for the time that I sailed her from Hong Kong. In fact, I gave to Matick and Taylor four of the best years of my lifetime, and now they claim that I owe them money."*

A frantic and stormy letter from Arlesta in 1883, was not well received by Crayton. He was weary of being expected to solve all the family problems. *"I should judge you were well by the scolding you gave me. You appear to think that I can fly like a bird and leave here at any time and come home. I have my trials and tribulations here as well as anywhere else. And do not suppose that everyday is sunshine with me any more than it is with you at home. I do not want to alarm you or mother, but I have been laying upon my back for three or four months, from the effects of a gun shot wound that I got from a native, while punishing him for attacking a friend of mine"*

and nearly drowning him."

Crayton logically said that he could do nothing about the legal problems, and that if Nelson wouldn't pay rent, their mother could evict him. He was worried about the trouble between Nelson and Arlesta, saying that neither spoke respectfully of the other. (At the time Crayton wrote, Nelson had already been dead for 6 months. He died in February 1883 at the age of 50, from pneumonia. Arlesta would write later that "*it has pleased the devil to take one of my worst enemies last February.*") Crayton ended his letter on a friendlier note, asking about Arlesta's husband, Manuel, who was in Florida for his health. He added, "*I am in tolerable good health now, and building a new house for a dwelling and store.*"

Crayton's letters about the lawsuit were angry. He claimed it was all a swindle and an underhanded fraud. He had been naive in his dealings with Matick and Taylor. The good Captain was an honest man he trusted them to keep their word. The law suit dragged on for three years and Crayton was disgusted with the whole business.

In 1884, he wrote, "*I suppose that I have about four or five thousand dollars worth of property, if there was no incumbrances upon it, in Granby. But since the Sharpers from San Francisco and the lawyers of Connecticut have got hold of it, I do not suppose that there is enough left to pay the expence of a journey home. Anyway I am not agoing to throw good dollars after bad ones, nor will I earn money in the South Sea Islands and be speared and shot, as I have been, to keep a law suit running in Connecticut.*"

The earlier letters to West Granby had all trouble and violence edited out of them. Crayton never wrote

about the rough and dangerous life he must have led. However, as Arlesta besieged him with complaints and troubles, he admitted to some of his own. He mentioned trouble with a British man-of-war over some punishment the white residents gave the natives. *"If this is English law, thank God I am not an Englishman. I told them I was not their subject and they left me alone."* Crayton was now 54 years old. He had not been back to the States for 12 years - and he still had not mentioned his wife Bartola to his family.

Arlesta penned a desperate letter in late 1884 saying *"if it lies in your power, come home for God sake and let the Islands go to thunder."* Her brother tried to explain why he could not do this. *"I have here in the Islands in goods about \$7000, besides real estate at \$2000, and a Schooner that cost me in Sidney last April \$4000, besides boats and other gear about Yap. And besides this, I have a station at Pellew Island with \$1500 worth of trade, making a total of \$14,500. This is not in cash, but in property that must be looked after and taken care of to make it pay. And I have no one here that can do it but myself."*

"The Schooner must be sailed and navigated to make her pay. There are my stations at different Islands where we have European traders. They must be attended to at least once in six months or they would clear out with the produce. 3rd, there is my head station at Yap where there is plenty of competition. We have some great rogues out here who will take advantage of my absence or any false move I may make. 4th, I am used to this climate which is always Spring or Summer, and to this kind of life which suits me much better than freezing six months in the year and hav-

ing a cough all the time. Now what do you think would be the best for me to do? To throw up my vessel and let her lie and rot or be pillaged by the natives, and let my other property go to thunder, or for God sake (a gentleman that I am unacquainted with) to come home and be bullied by a parcel of Lawyers and scolded by you."

Crayton admitted this was a purely pecuniary view of the matter, and that he was worried about a place for his mother to live. However, he added, "I never intend to send one cent to pay lawyers who wish to keep the suit in court until the place is eat up by their fees and the expence of court."

The above letter was the first mention of both competition and rogues on Yap. Perhaps the reference was to the legendary Captain O'Keefe.

Arlesta wrote another miserable and anxious letter before she received one from Crayton. He answered with some asperity, and more than a little exasperation. "I am very sorry to hear that you are all in such a continual strain of distress. Whenever I have had the means, I never refused to contribute to the comfort of all, but now we have all come to mature years, and my circumstances are changed. I cannot see that I should be called upon with a cry of anguish every time a baby cuts a tooth or loses a toenail. Cannot any of you help yourselves without appealing to me? You are continually asking me to come home. You appear to think I am having a perfect holiday all my life, but to the contrary, I am obliged to work hard and go into many dangers to get a living. You write me about the lots of troubles you have as though you were the only afflicted one in the world. But remember no one is exempt and we must all bear them the

best way we can. Remember me to all and believe as ever your affectionate brother."

That was the last letter Arlesta ever received from Crayton. He had written it from Manila on November 6, 1884, and was on his way back to Yap.

In August 1885, Louis Matick was granted a lien on the Holcomb property to secure the judgement he won against Crayton for \$3500 damages plus \$225.68 costs.

Sometime in late 1885, Manuel Gutierrez read in a Spanish newspaper that Captain Crayton Holcomb had been murdered on Yap by the natives. Arlesta started writing letters - to the State Department, and to the United States Consulate in Hong Kong. Neither had any information about the reported death, and officials in Hong Kong found no trace of any property belonging to Crayton.

Arlesta also wrote the Consul in Manila asking about the murder and about any property or possessions owned by her brother. Julius G. Voigt wrote that he knew nothing beyond the notice of Holcomb's death. *"I well remember your late Brother during his short visit to Manila in 1884, and he told me he was married, and settled at Yap as a trader, and that his wife was Spanish. As the Carolines have only recently been acquired and occupied by the Spanish government, it remains to be seen whether property held at Yap by Captain Holcomb is endowed with a legal title. If his widow yet resides in the Colony, I think you might apply to her for information."*

In June 1886, the farm in West Granby faced foreclosure, and the official report on Crayton's death came from the State Department in Washington. They sent a statement from Commander John M.

McGlensey, commanding Officer of the U.S. Steamer *Ossipee*. *"Captain Holcomb was killed some time in May 1885, by the inhabitants of French Island, which is situated near the Admiralty Islands. I heard the story from two of the Yap men who accompanied him, and one of whom was in the boat at the time he met his death. It seems he went to the island for the purpose of buying some shells from the natives, while standing up in the boat showing them some cloth, they speared him and he fell into the water. They dragged him ashore. Every man in the boat was wounded, but they managed to get the boat back to the ship."*

The grieving family in West Granby received another shock when a letter arrived in August 1886 from Bartola Holcomb. It was addressed to *"Dear Mother"* and she mourned her husband's death. She said he was killed on the Island of St. Matthias where he had gone to trade. Bartola then said that Crayton wished to allow his family to live on his property, but that his mother was to be the head of the household, and after her death - Arlesta - *"as long as she lives or at least till I myself require to use the place, but I do not think this is a very near possibility."*

Bartola said she had many expenses to settle at Crayton's death so she could not send a present or plan a visit. She requested family photographs and asked them to write to her. Her letter ended with affectionate regards.

Dismay and despair probably greeted this letter. Betsey and Arlesta could think that the Manila Consul was mistaken, but a letter from the unknown wife was tangible evidence. If the women didn't lose their farm to foreclosure, they might lose it to a daughter-in-law from Yap!

Arlesta continued her written pursuit of information and possible inheritance. The Secretary of the Navy gave her the address for Commander McGlensey. He wrote her, word for word, the identical report she had received from the State Department. Manuel kept reading the Spanish papers for news and wrote to his wife from New York. He hinted at a conspiracy between the German and Spanish governments and said that Crayton was killed because he did not get any protection from the Spanish government.

In October 1886, the *New York Sun* published a long article about Holcomb's death and about "*a fortune waiting in the Caroline Islands - Millions!*" Arlesta then turned to the press for help in her quest. The Thompsonville Press in Connecticut, carried a longer story. Most of the information in the articles came from Arlesta, and they were filled with tales of wealth and betrayal, but no mention of a wife. Unfortunately, there are many inconsistencies between the newspaper articles and the letters written by Crayton Holcomb.

The papers said "*he prospered greatly, made money constantly, and was the owner of a large fleet of merchant vessels.*" The New York paper claimed that he bought the entire island of Yap, had three wharves, built stores and dwellings, laid out villages, paved the streets, civilized the natives, and that Spain agreed he was to keep all of his profits from the island. Even allowing for some exaggeration, these are preposterous statements. Somehow, Arlesta convinced herself that Crayton had amassed a fortune on Yap, and that the Spanish government had taken it. Some papers speculated it was as great as 5 million dol-

lars.

Arlesta was quoted in the papers as saying, *"I do not believe that Captain Holcomb met his death the way I was told. The Spanish officials have manifested a singular reticence about it. The Spanish papers have suddenly ceased to talk about his death and his enormous wealth. I think there has been some underhanded business about it, and I have told the State Department at Washington so, but I get no satisfaction. I want to get at the truth."*

The tireless Arlesta wrote to men from a missionary ship, to the American Consulate in Marseilles, and again to the Consul in Hong Kong, who finally had some information for her. He said that he had questioned Captain O'Keefe from Yap, and his statement was enclosed.

O'Keefe wrote, *"I knew Capt. C.P. Holcomb for several years, residing in the same neighborhood in Yap. He resided in that Island from 1875 to the date of his murder May 6th 1885. He went from Yap to Tenche Islands near the coast of New Guinea on a trading expedition, and while there was killed by the natives. The cause of the difficulty is unknown to me. The mate of his vessel, Mr. Wigmore, an Australian, brought the vessel back to Yap, and it is now in the possession of Mr. Williams, a ship broker of Sydney New South Wales. Capt. Holcomb was largely in debt at the time of his death and his property was not sufficient to discharge them. His reputed wife, Bartola Garrido, is a native of the Island Guam, and still resides in Yap."*

The helpful Consul in Manila, Julius G. Voigt, sent a longer statement from O'Keefe to the Hartford Law firm of Case, Maltbie and Bryant. Both Case and Maltbie lived in Granby, and probably represented

Arlesta. Voigt added, that *"from reports current here in Manila, I already had found out that no assets were to be reckoned upon."*

O'Keefe described how Crayton had acquired the schooner *Rabeah* after the crew and passengers took it away from Capt. Hays. Miss Bartola Garrido was one of the passengers, *"and in admiration of the courage of the late C.P.H. displayed in the taking charge of the vessel from the Pellew natives, she fell an easy victim, and have lived as man and wife up to the time of his death. He has openly acknowledged her as his wife, and has written the same on some kind of document to that extent, and also has made a will in her favour just previous to his leaving Yap on his last fatal voyage. At the time those things took place, there was not Missionarys of any denomination here, nor were they up to the time of his death."*

"As regards his property, there is some gross error. The man at the time of his death was very heavily involved, and some of his creditors was glad to take whatever they could get, and I must give Mrs. Bartola H. credit for making every effort in trying to liquidate all the claims."

Despite all this evidence, Arlesta persisted in her letter writing. A former missionary on the Island of Ponape suggested writing to Captain O'Keefe in 1887. That was a letter Arlesta did not write.

Meanwhile, the wheels of foreclosure moved very slowly in Granby. The Town had liens on the property in 1889 for unpaid taxes, which probably delayed the foreclosure. Another certificate of foreclosure was issued to Louis M. Matick in 1890, and he sold the property, at a loss, the same day, to Edward D. and James T. Coogan of Windsor Locks, for \$1000. Four

months later, the Coogans sold the three parcels of land back to Arlesta for \$250 and a \$100 mortgage.

Betsey Dean, age 79, died in the family homestead on January 24, 1892 - Crayton's birthday. Manuel Gutierrez died in New York, of consumption, in January 1894 and Arlesta died in West Granby in August 1894, of cancer. Arlesta was able to stay in her home until she died, although she never paid off the mortgage. Her executor sold the property in 1895 to Alonzo Edgerton and Scott Hayes.

Arlesta Holcomb Gutierrez left her white cashmere shawl to her daughter Nellie M. Huggins, an ivory headed cane inlaid with silver and pearl to Bidwell Holcomb of New York City, and a Japanese glove box to Hubert N. Griffin of Granby.

This legacy was all that Arlesta had of the fabled fortune of Captain Crayton Philo Holcomb.

Epilog

This article could not have been written without the generous donation of the Captain's letters. John Gutierrez of California, a direct descendant of Arlesta and Manuel, gave copies of the original letters to the Salmon Brook Historical Society. Prior to this, the Society only had one newspaper article about Crayton Holcomb in their files.

Another letter, from Louis Gutierrez, a grandson of Arlesta's, indicated that he was continuing the search for information about Crayton. Louis, in 1970, had the originals of the Crayton Holcomb letters, and allowed his nephew John to copy them. The originals are now, in 1997, missing.

Louis wrote to the Catholic Mission on Yap in 1970, and received a most informative reply. "*I did, how-*

ever, contact an old gentleman here, Fernando Ruepong, who communicated to me the following information about Captain Holcomb, your paternal grand-uncle."

"Captain Holcomb did indeed have a trading store here at Yap. No one can give exact dates, but it was sometime before the Spanish occupation of Yap, which occurred about 1885. Captain Holcomb bought copra, beche de mer, perhaps trochus; he traded rice, knives, tobacco, etc. for these."

"He lived on a small island close to the mainland of Yap, called Blalatch. This is no longer an island, but is now a peninsula, having been connected to the mainland by fill. The mainland at this point is called Tabilau, and in Captain Holcomb's time, his residence was connected to this mainland by causeway. It is interesting to note that the Yap Islands Legislature presently stands on the site of Holcomb's home."

"Captain Holcomb brought his wife here from Guam. She was Chamorro, probably Guamanian. Her name: Bartola Holcomb. She was also called 'Maram' by the Yapese, (It is this a corruption of 'madam,' or is it a Chamorro name? It is not a Yapese name or title.) Bartola lived and died here and is, I am told, buried in our cemetery, though the grave is certainly unmarked at this time. Curiously, there is absolutely no record of Bartola Holcomb in the Church Registers, which are quite complete. This is strange, for all deaths of Christians were recorded. There were evidently no children of this marriage, for again the Registers are silent about any Baptisms. Bartola is said to have lived right through the Spanish and German regimes on Yap, and into the Japanese regime, when she died - a very old lady."

"During the Spanish regime (from about 1885 until the end of the Spanish-American War), one Bartola Garrido was the official interpreter for the Spanish Governor. Her name graces many of the deeds we have for the Mission Lands here. Juan Borja was said to be the brother of Bartola; he lived near the Holcomb home. Another name for Bartola is 'Maram Holcomb' and 'Maram Borja.' She was a very interesting person. For services rendered to the Spanish crown (raising the Spanish flag after it was lowered by the German gunboat Eltig, she was allowed the title Dona."

"Captain Holcomb also went to Palau and to other islands in his trading ventures. He was given a small island in Palau called Ruger, for a home or store there."

"The site of Captain Holcomb's death was probably St. Matthias Island, off the north coast of New Guinea, not too far from here. A Yapese man, Yeloth, was with Holcomb when he was taken by the Moros (natives of New Guinea) and saw him killed by spears and then lifted on spearpoints and carried away. Yeloth dragged their boat out through the low tide and made off. Yeloth was from Lamer Village in Yap. Back on the ship, another Yapese, Betamag of Nemar Village, knew how to use the compass and so navigate back to Yap."

"A postscript on Bartola, written from Truk in 1922, shortly after the arrival of the Spanish Jesuit missionaries. 'We received the following information from Rome. The island of Yap may now remain without a missionary since there is no favorable movement towards Catholicism. The chiefs, called PTZUNG, control through terror. They are opposed to all innovation. The lack of morality on the part of the young women is the cause for the instability of the marriages."

We found a group of Chamorros and a few Christians, not enough though to start a Mission anew. The famous lady, Dona Bartola Garrido, who was the only one to protest the German occupation, still worked on Yap. She did much good.' Found in the Mission files."

How could this missionary find all this information 85 years later? Memories are long in tiny, primitive lands, and stories of the past are told and retold.

What is the truth of this tale? Was Captain Holcomb a millionaire? That seems highly unlikely. His letters relate the rise and fall of his fortunes as regularly as the tides. He added up his worth in one of his last letters home - \$14,500. This probably sounded like a fortune to his relatives in West Granby, who were on the verge of losing the family farm for a \$2000 debt. But, Crayton's wealth was in trade goods, which he probably bought on credit; in a ship, which he did buy on credit; and in real estate, which has no value unless someone wants it.

The facts of his death seem clear, he was murdered by the Moros, not by some German and Spanish conspiracy. The role of Captain David Dean O'Keefe in this story is interesting. Crayton must have known him, he would certainly know all the other white men on Yap. Yet we never read his name in a letter from Crayton. Perhaps that is not surprising. Crayton clearly edited his life in writing to West Granby. He discussed family, mutual friends, his health, and his business ventures. He rarely mentioned details about his voyages, or the dangers inherent in his life style. He never mentioned his personal life, especially his native wife, Bartola.

O'Keefe certainly knew Crayton, and he thought highly of Bartola. A rather romanticized article about

"Captain O'Keefe - the King of Yap," appeared in a 1969 issue of Argosy Magazine. Tarang was still called O'Keefe's island by the natives. He was described as a "*brawny, redheaded Irish-American from Savannah, Georgia.*" He married a native woman, fathered five children, and evidently made money by literally making money - the large stone disks treasured by the Yap people.

And what do we know about the man Crayton Holcomb? He had the intelligence and initiative to rise from greenhand to Captain of a ship. He was bold, adventurous, and loved the South Sea Islands. He was not a very good businessman, perhaps he was too trusting in his dealings with others. He was resilient - despite frequent failures and losses, he never stopped trying to succeed. He loved his mother and his family. In all his years away from home, he never stopped writing or caring. As the eldest son, he felt responsible for his mother, and he tried to help his sister and brother. He was generous to his family when he had the money. He was secretive about his private life, perhaps he knew his mother and sister would never understand his having a native wife. We don't know what he looked like, despite at least half a dozen letters saying he was enclosing a photograph of himself. No photographs have been found.

The search is not over yet. Recently, John Gutierrez attended a reunion and met a former missionary from Yap - coincidence, fate, or serendipity? He too, remembered the Holcomb name, and knew where his house has been. John and his wife plan a trip to Yap with their new found friend. They hope to find more information. Memories are long on Yap.

Addendum:

Beche-de-mer are sea slugs, the Chinese used them to make soup.

Caroline Islands - 525 sq.mi., discovered by Spain 1526, governed by Spain 1886-1899, sold to Germany 1899, occupied by Japan in 1914. They are located in the west Pacific, contain 3 major island groups - Palau, Truk, and Yap.

Copra is dried coconut.

Guam is the largest island in the Marianas Group, inhabited by Chamorros.

Guap or Yap, 39 sq.mi., a group of 14 islands surrounded by coral reef, located in the west Caroline Islands, western Pacific, Micronesian natives use stone money.

New Guinea is a large island near Australia.

Pellew Islands, correctly Palau or Pelew, part of the west Caroline Islands.

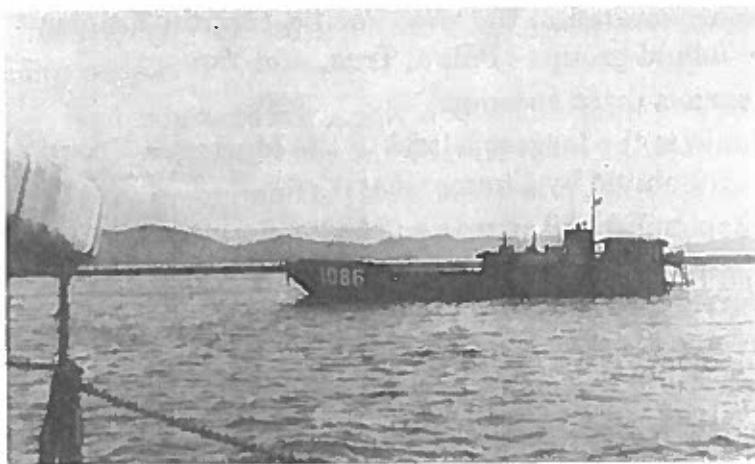
St. Matthias Island is located off the northern coast of New Guinea.

Trochus - possibly a shell?

Full Speed Ahead ...at 6 Knots??

by Robert P. Stokes

(Recollections of WWII LCT's)



LCT 1086 - BB - Wakayama, Japan, Jan. 1946
(BB probably Boat Basin)

The WWII LCT's were an ugly duckling that were born during the war, lasted through Korea, and faded into history except for some post war use in the off shore oil wells and on the DEW LINE in Alaska. They were only 120 feet long, 32 feet wide, and as boxy as you can get, with a bow ramp that threw fear into officers on any other ship when the LCT came alongside, for that bow ramp was like a can opener that could rip open their steel hulls.

It took the power of three Gray Marine diesels to push this flat bottom hull, and the square bow, with its ramp, through the ocean, and pushing the entire

Pacific ahead of us. They were made for 700 mile cruising, but our LCT group changed all of that as we island- and atoll-hopped across the Pacific. Outboard of the three propulsion engines were to generators for the electric power, and below those five diesels were triple, four bladed propellers and triple rudders as an attempt to make this flat bottom go in a straight course.

For a crew, there were two officers, and 12 enlisted men, mostly specialists as motor machinists, electricians, quartermaster, radioman, bosun, gunner, cook, etc. The officers, ensigns and Lt jg's were fresh out of college and midshipman schools, and few had had any previous experience in ship handling... they learned that at training in Solomons, Maryland, New Orleans, and the west coast. The enlisted crews came out of service schools or boot camp.

For a junior officer, it was good duty, when compared with being a deck officer on some large commissioned ship like a cruiser, where they might be lost in the mob. Often called SKIPPER, which the Navy frowned on, we were usually addressed in messages as Commanding Officer or Officer-in-Charge, for these were non-commissioned "Crafts", but in an LCT GROUP that was commissioned. PT Boat skippers may have been more glamorous, but we had our glory!

I never knew how we were picked for this assignment. We all had to get along with each other in the confinement, and we did just that. And to crowd matters more, my LCT was a group flagship with two staff officers and their six enlisted crew added to the chow lines... can't remember where everyone slept, and with four hour watches, the skippers and execs

only had four hours off before the next watch.

Although we crossed the Pacific in convoys with other LCT's, we did verify our own navigation with star, moon, and sun sights. But plotting our position was usually a disaster for my open can of peanuts, usually ending up as an ashtray. When not otherwise occupied, it was a good chance to learn from the crew, how to work with rope, clean a gun, or practice more on semaphore signaling.

It took some adjusting for a 23 year old to give orders to some crew members that were in their mid thirties. I was lucky that, prior to commission, I had been an enlisted man going through boot camp, service schools, and being on a service school staff. My exec. was a Navy "Brat", with a father as captain of a large Navy Ammunition Ship. I was an engineering graduate of Dartmouth.

We probably had better food than most ships, and could forage on our own from supply ships and bases. Working with a battleship often brought us ice cream and steaks, but our steaks were better than theirs, and my cook could do wonders! It was a wonder that we never lost Sam to another ship, but he was content, and we had visiting officers come to us for a good meal. When the Supply Officer at Pearl Harbor listed only two spices on the work sheet, and suggested that they had others, my cook grabbed the chance to get all the other 22 that were not listed!

It should be noted that, as group flagship, we had a 10 x 10 x 10 foot reefer on our deck, to supply food for the rest of the group. It had its own power or could be run off of our generators. Any normal ship would have an anchor up on the bow, but no, an LCT had to be different and have a large stern anchor and 900

feet of cable off the stern, run by a very large electric motor. This anchor was necessary for beaching and for with-drawing from a beach. And the bow anchor was replaced by a gasoline-operated ramp engine, and with a stand-by hand operated crank.

LCT stands for Landing Craft Tank, and the early Pacific landings, as well as in Italy and D-Day in France, made good use of these crafts. Later in the Pacific war, they were used more often as utility vessels, carrying cargo, personnel, hospital vans, bulldozers, cranes, 16 inch shells, and also doing some mine sweeping. They had the power of a tug boat, but the speed of a snail!

LCT 1196 had a long travel history. Built at the BISON SHIPYARD in North Tonawanda, New York, near Buffalo, she was ferried through the N.Y. Barge Canal, down the Hudson and to New York City. There she was provisioned, separated into three sections, and loaded onto LST 1033. To get to Pearl Harbor we escorted the 1196 on the deck of the LST to Cuba, the Panama Canal, and San Diego.

At Pearl Harbor, cranes unloaded the sections, and shipyard personnel, plus our crew, reassembled the ship. Then came work around the harbor and to the other islands, very relaxing until the time to go west. Our briefing told us of Islands and Atolls we never heard of, and we all headed for our chart books. The supplies came on board, along with two large landing craft, spotted on our decks for ballast, but destroying the nice play area where we used to play "Pepper" with some soft balls and a bat.

LCT's have a funny motion underway, being flat bottomed and with no keel. It was like riding a surfboard. As one skipper was quoted after a typhoon,

four ships got lost from the convoy, but he said that it was for the better, since an LCT astern of him would suddenly surf-board past him and end up on his bow.

Each "cruise" from Atoll to Atoll took about a week, from 700 miles to 1500 miles. We went west from Pearl to Johnson Island to Majuro to Eniwetok to Guam to Ulithi in the Carolines, and finally to San Pedro Bay off Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. Then we went to work, after dumping the deck cargo. Our main cargo was material for building an air strip down on Mactan Island near CEBU, an island that is famous because Magellan was killed there by Lapu Lapu, a native.

We worked round the clock, lightening some Liberty Ships of their cargo, and then beaching where there were no docks. Only a few winks of sleep, while we were unloaded, and then back to the Liberty Ship. In July of 1945, the Navy gave us more fire-power, and we headed north to LUZON, with bulldozers and cranes for cargo, but LCT 1196 had only a jeep and a very sea sick colonel on board, headed for Okinawa. Two days out of the latter, we tangled with a typhoon that almost did us in, and which kept us at sea for two weeks and almost took us back to Guam. On arrival in Okinawa, we heard of the Atomic Bomb drop, but had to face up to Kamikaze attacks for two weeks before the peace.

It was a relaxing cruise north to Japan where we beached and docked at Wakayama before later moving up to KOBE. My exec. officer took over the 1196 while I moved on board the flotilla flagship as operations officer. The last I saw of the 1196 was in Tokyo Bay as my boss took command of some 14 ships, headed for the west coast of the States, while I did

communications and navigation. LCT 1196 had been in Japan for six months, and I had had 18 months of sea duty, and was ready to come home and get married. Home by MARCUS ISLAND, ENIWETOK, HAWAII and SAN DIEGO...May 1946. LCT 1996 had been good to me!

Of my wonderful fellow officers and crew, only one crew member keeps in touch. Both of my group staff officers have died, as have three of my flotilla commanders. Some of the crew went on to better things, like law, medical school and professional baseball among some of them. One went back to coal mining and lost a leg. I tip my hat to all of them!

One unusual cargo was added when we left CEBU and sailed down to Oriental Negros, carrying hospital vans, but returning with nursing and pregnant Philippine ladies going to the hospital in CEBU. Some brought their chickens and pigs! We found the islanders to be delightful people, and on Negros they even had a party and dance for us. It was a chance for us to dress up, for we had been used to the sloppy CB outfits... and drink some of the beer we stole from them! If a cargo ship wanted to get beer ashore, LCT's would do the job, but somehow an open deck plate would swallow a case or two, and who would notice when the total cases probably exceeded 2000!

Litchfield And The 2nd Connecticut Artillery

bu William G. Domonell

One of the items on display in the "American Wars" exhibit held during July, 1996 at the Newman Hungerford Museum in Harwinton, Connecticut, was a Confederate flag captured by the soldiers of the Second Regiment Connecticut Volunteer Heavy Artillery at the Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia. That unit had originally been mustered into service in Litchfield as the Nineteenth Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, and the following is a partial history of the regiment.

Following General McClellan's disastrous Peninsula Campaign in 1862, President Lincoln issued an urgent call for 300,000 volunteers "for three years or the duration of the War." To lend his support to the cause, Governor Buckingham issued an appeal on July 3, 1862 to the towns in the state to raise a minimum of seven new regiments.

At a convention of the county towns held in Litchfield on July 22, it was voted unanimously to raise an entire regiment within the county and that High Sheriff Leverette W. Wessells should be appointed its colonel. While enlistment notices offered \$2 per man, the convention voted that every town should offer a \$100 bounty to each of its volunteers.

In an article appearing in the December, 1957 issue of The Lure of the Litchfield Hills, a W.J. Finan

wrote that men of all ages from 16 to 60 volunteered for service. In one case a 61-year-old dyed his grey whiskers to give him the appearance of being 20 years younger. On the other hand, underage boys wrote the number 18 on a slip of paper and then slipped it into their shoes. When the recruiting officer asked if they were over 18, the boys could truthfully respond, "Yes, I'm over 18."

Sixty-eight Litchfield men and seven from nearby Morris answered the governor's appeal and enlisted in Company A.

Once the necessary number of troops had been raised, the nine companies were brought together in Litchfield during the last week in August and marched to their campsite on the farm of Cyrus Catlin on Chestnut Hill near the intersection of today's Chestnut Hill and Camp Dutton Roads. Within a few days a tenth company had been formed with recruits selected from twenty-five different towns by the other company commandants.

It had originally been planned to name the encampment Camp Wolcott after former General Oliver Wolcott, but following the death of Lieut. Henry M. Dutton at the battle of Cedar Mountain, Virginia, it was named Camp Dutton in his memory. Before he volunteered for military service the lieutenant had been practicing law in Litchfield. It is unfortunate that his name does not appear on the Civil War monument on Litchfield's Green along with the names of the town's other men who lost their lives in that war.

Because of its nearness to the center of town, the camp was visited from morning 'til night by the curiosity seekers as well as by mothers, aunts, and girlfriends who supplied the troops with many articles

of homemade food "not conducive to the suppression of the rebellion." According to Colonel Elisha Kellogg who was sent from General McClellan's army to drill the recruits and who was growing impatient with all the goings-on, "if there were nine hundred men in the camp, there were certainly nine thousand women most of the time."

Following the mustering-in ceremony of the volunteers of the Nineteenth on September 11, Governor Buckingham stated that he was highly pleased with the regiment's appearance and it was his opinion that no better or more promising one had ever previously been sent from the state.

After spending three weeks in camp, the 889 officers and men broke camp on September 15 and after giving three parting cheers for Camp Dutton, they marched down to the railroad station in East Litchfield where 23 cars were waiting to take them to New York. Two days later they were in Washington, D.C.

During most of 1863 the regiment was assigned to garrison duty in the "Defenses of Washington, South of the Potomac." Much of their time was spent in camp, training. The following amusing scene was found in the February 26 issue of the Litchfield Enquirer. The order went out one day for the companies to fall in without their weapons or any other equipment. After they had formed two lines on a field of untrodden snow, Colonel Kellogg in his thundering voice gave the order to load. The men fashioned as many snowballs as they could before the order to fire was given. When the colonel shouted, "Commence firing!" the battle began. "The air was filled with snowballs bursting thick and fast against the noses,

Those Litchfield men listed by the Connecticut Adjutant General's office as having been killed in action were: Capt. Luman Wadhams, Corp. Joseph E. Camp; Apollos C. Morse, Almon B. Bradley; Lyman J. Smith, Jr.; Robert Watt; John Handel; John Iffland; Albert A. Jones; Willard Parmelee; and Patrick Ryan. In addition, the following died from their wounds in that battle: Corp. Charles Adams, Jr., Corp. George W. Potter, and Andrew J. Brooker.

According to the same set of records, Isaac Baldwin in the nearby town of Morris was its only fatality in that battle.

The name of Apollos C. Morse who died of his wounds on June 2 is listed on the Civil War Monument in Northfield along with that of Corp. Joseph E. Camp. Inscribed in the red sandstone are the words: "That the generations to come may know them." The monument, erected soon after the end of the war, is said to have been the first one in the country to have been completed.

In 1874 a white marble monument was erected on the green at Center Park in memory of the men who lost their lives during the war. On the south side of the stone appear the words "Pro Patria", while the names of those men lost at the battle of Cold Harbor appear on the east side of the stone.

Although his name does not appear on the monument at the Litchfield Green, there is a stone erected to the memory of Amos H. Stillson in Litchfield's West Cemetery.

When Capt. Luman Wadhams went to visit his brother, Lt. Henry W. Wadhams of the 14th Connecticut, he learned that he had been killed two days before at Hanover Junction. Four days later the cap-

eyes, or broadside of some unlucky individuals... The battle raged with terrific onslaught until the bugle sounded to disperse... All being over, a regular jollification ensued, with everyone showing wounds and bruises. Among the seriously wounded were Colonel Kellogg and Captains Rice and Peck but, with the aid of Patent Medicines, they will soon recover."

According to the August 20, 1863 edition of the Litchfield Enquirer, the troops, bored and eager to engage the enemy in battle, "had to be content with going on daily excursions to pick blackberries."

On November 22 the Nineteenth was assigned to the 6th Army Corps as a regiment of heavy artillery and was directed to be filled up to the maximum artillery standard. By March 1, there were 1800 men in the several companies of the Second Regiment Connecticut Volunteer Heavy Artillery, that name having been designated by Governor Buckingham.

Although it had not yet been in battle, the Second Artillery, fighting now as infantry, was assigned to lead the brigade of veterans at the battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia at 5 a.m. on June 1, 1864. The regiment's loss of 285 killed, missing, or wounded, is said to have been greater than that of any other Connecticut regiment in any single battle.

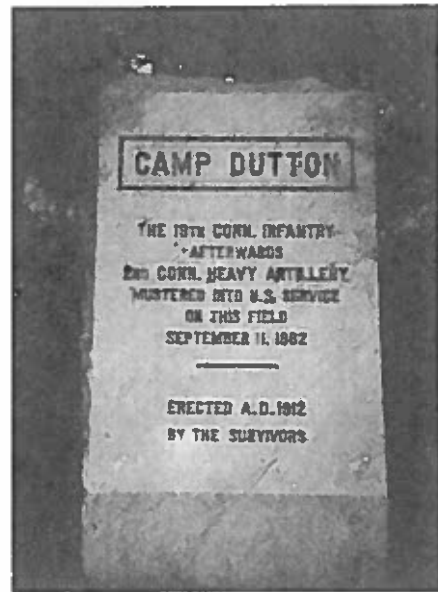
Part Twelve of The Civil War Through The Camera relates that when General Grant ordered an attack all along the line upon the Confederate entrenchments on June 3rd, he lost ten thousand men in twenty minutes. Grant later wrote in his memoirs, "Cold Harbor is, I think, the only battle I ever fought that I would not fight again under any circumstances. I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made."

tain was wounded in the abdomen at Cold Harbor and died of these wounds two days later either at White House, Virginia or in a government wagon on the way there. Both Luman and Henry died without knowing their younger brother, Sgt. Edward Wadhams of the 8th Connecticut, had died at Fort Darling on the 16th of the same month.

Theodore F. Vaill summed it up very accurately when he wrote in his history of the Second Connecticut (1868), "Three brothers, in three different Connecticut regiments, in three different army corps, all slain in the approaches to Richmond within the space of fourteen days!"

When the veterans arrived in Litchfield for their heroes' reception on August 1, they found all the principal buildings decorated with all sorts of flags, banners, and badges. The most conspicuous one of all, however, was the red Greek cross on a white field - the emblem of the 6th Corps. A magnificent triumphal arch had been erected across East St. Directly above the keystone and across the top of the arch was inscribed: "SURRENDER OF LEE'S ARMY, APRIL 9th, 1865." Upon each side of the archway were emblazoned the battles in which the regiment participated.

The 300 veterans who were present at the event voted not to visit Camp Dutton, since "marching (was) not agreeable to them as when on the war path." They probably were remembering some of their comrades "who died of disease - worn out by marching." On one forced march they covered twenty-seven miles after marching for seventeen consecutive hours. On another such march, twenty-six miles were covered after twenty-one consecutive hours.



Fifty years later an appeal for monetary donations to be used for the purchase and erection of a suitable monument at Camp Dutton was sent to the surviving veterans. Plans called for the unveiling and dedication service to take place at the time of the regiment's annual reunion. On September 11, 1912, the fiftieth anniversary of the mustering-in of the regiment, a five-foot high, red granite monument was unveiled at the site of their former Civil War camp.

After another fifty years, a centennial memorial service commemorating the massing of the volunteers was held at St. Michael's Church on October 6, 1962. Appearing in the church bulletin was the following prayer written by an unknown Civil War soldier:

"I asked God for strength, that I might achieve,/ I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey./ I asked for health that

I might do greater things,/ I was given infirmity that I might do better things./ I asked for riches, that I might be happy./ I was given poverty, that I might be wise./ I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men./ I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God./ I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life,/ I was given life, that I might enjoy all things./ I got nothing that I asked for - but everything I had hoped for./ Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered./ I am among all men, most richly blessed."

Letters From A Lucky Soldier

by Philip I. Eschbach, Sr.

Thirty-two letters and several poems written by Sergeant Robert Hilton of the 120th Regiment of the New York State Volunteers to his wife, Mary, and one to his niece, Jennie, back home in New Baltimore, New York, have surfaced. The first letter was written at Chain Bridge, Virginia, on 31 August 1862. The last letter was written from "near" Petersburg, Virginia, on 21 October 1864. Fortunately Hilton was careful to date and site nearly every letter with something like "Encamped at Manassas Junction, November 10, 1862" or "Camp Near Culpepper (Virginia), Sept. 21, 63." Generally, these dates are weeks, sometimes months, after the engagements at those places. It is possible, perhaps, that the 120th Regiment was an outfit frequently held in reserve some miles away and brought to the battlefield after the issue had been settled.

Unfortunately, Hilton scarcely mentions any of the great battles in which he must have participated. Either he arrived on the scene much later, as the dates of his letters seem to indicate, or he refrained from writing descriptions of battles in deference to his wife's feelings and health--she apparently frequently complained of poor health in her letters to him. None of her letters have survived. A notable exception to his reticence is in his letter of 5 July 1863, from Gettysburg.

In that letter, he still doesn't describe the battle,

I need not tell you that Ten
Months from tomorrow I shall
be my own boss again.

I long for the time to come
when I shall the happiness
to enjoy your society again.

I hope I shall be able
to get home this winter on a
pension.

The weather continues
good. I expect that Grant
will soon be making a move
in this department.

I enclose a slip of our
old flag that is ^{now} followed and
followed under ~~various~~
You can tell by the looks
of it that the old flag has
been hoisted times. Please take
care of the slip for I hope I
shall have the pleasure to look
upon it in coming days with
pride and satisfaction.

but he does talk about the aftermath--in his own words:

I am now in the hospital helping to care for the wounded. We had a very sever engagement on the 2nd of July lost is very heavy in killed and wounded. Our Captain even shot dead. Lieutenant Turner, has lost an arm. I helped to carry Turner of the field and have been with him every since. We have lost about twenty out of our company in killed and wounded.

Interestingly, he doesn't mention the miserable conditions of 4 and 5 July, occasioned by a downpour. And, oddly, he fails to mention other events that must have been the talk of the camps. Although Hilton was camped at Catlett Station, he makes no mention of the famous "Buckland Races," when Union forces fled in disarray before Jeb Stuart's butternut boys just eleven days before Hilton's letter of 31 October 1863. Nor does Sergeant Hilton, writing from Brandy Station, mention that General "Rooney" Lee, son of General Lee, had been wounded there. Toward the end of the war, Hilton becomes less reticent (more confident of the outcome?) about battles and mentions a skirmish at Ox Ford which occurred when, after the Wilderness, General Lee moved the Army of Northern Virginia to try to protect the Virginia Central Railroad and to interpose his forces between Richmond and Grant's huge army. In other letters of that period, he notes "Sherman's movements southwest," and he talks of many balls attended by ladies from Alexandria and Washington. In a letter to his wife, he expresses no surprise that one of her letters from New York, dated 10 November 1862, arrived at his camp

in Virginia on 13 November, a speed not likely to be matched by today's postal service.

The real interest of Robert Hilton's letters lies in the picture we get of him and army life in general. In an early letter of 14 November 1862, from Manassas Junction, Virginia, he replies to his wife's complaint that he is not home to help her with the chores. Apparently, she had asked him if he had forgotten her and the promise he had made to love and protect her. He assures her that he has not forgotten her, but that his duty to his country requires him to be where he is. The tone of the letter is reminiscent of Cavalier poet Richard Lovelace, who answered his wife's complaint about his going to war by saying that he could not love her so much "loved I not honor more." Hilton's letter shows, like many of his other letters, a deeply religious man of great patriotism. It could well serve as a lesson for today's youth.

Most of Hilton's letters deal with problems at home and life in camp. In a letter from camp at Falmouth, Virginia, dated 7 December 1862, he thanks his wife for some mittens and expresses mild surprise: "I received my mittens both at one time." In the same letter, he grows nostalgic about his dog, Old Trooper. He also gives a good idea of the appearance of the camp.

We are now encamped in a lot about (illegible) acre square, surrounded with woods, and a few miles from Falmouth, five companies are encamped on one side and five on the other, the space in center forms a parade ground, each company forms a street the fronts facing each other... You will be able to form some idea of the size and shape (of their

tents) when I tell you the size of the canvas...5 feet wide and ten feet long. Crotches (i.e., a tree limb with a fork at one end) 4 feet long. The canvas thrown over the pole and each end pegged down. They look much like hen coops in a line, we have to creep in on all fours, for the floor we use pine branches...

In other letters, Hilton is concerned with his wife's problems at home, urging her to hire some help. He tells her to get rid of the "big squashes," as he won't be home in time to eat them; and he advises her to buy good quality bee hives and asks about the price of honey. In a later letter, he tells of seeing President Lincoln (before the apotheosis, of course), and in another letter, he states that he is in a "Camp of Distribution" (what we in WWII called a "repple depple"?) with convalescents and members of various other units. While stationed on the "Rapperhannock," he mentions that the brass is permitting only two ten-day furloughs per hundred men, and he complains that "promotions in the army goes a good deal by favours." In the last letter, he assures his dear Mary that he is in good health and weighs 140 pounds. From "Branday" Station, 23 February 1864, he denounces a preacher who "used to bye whiskey 50 cents a canteen and sell it to an enlisted man for 2 dollars."

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