



An Ordinary Man James C. Stearns and the American Civil War

By John & Liz McCann

James C. Stearns was the third of David and Mary Stearns' eight children. He was born on September 10th, 1840 and died on February 9th, 1909. He lived a typical mid-19th century American life. He was a farmer, logger, meat packer, and day laborer. When he needed work he moved around Maine to find a job. He eventually came back home, married a Lovell girl, and had four children, one of whom died very young. He started life as a farmer's boy, and ended life as a farmer on the same piece of land where he was born. This is a life story that applies to thousands of Mainers over the generations. He was an ordinary man who personifies all that is right about Maine and the United States.

We like our heroes to fit certain molds: fighting against impossible odds; leading a charge against a fortified position; inspiring others to do the impossible. But courage and heroism take many forms. Sometimes it means putting your head down and persevering. Sometimes it means moving forward when so many around you are sick and dying. Sometimes it's quietly going about your duty without a lot of fuss, whether that duty involves helping save your country, or raising a family, or getting a crop in ahead of bad weather. The origin of the word duty -- that which we owe one another -- seemed to define James Stearns. He fulfilled his duty on many different levels. He was very representative of the Civil War regiment he joined, the 12th Maine Infantry. Always on the edge of what others define as great deeds, somehow never quite grasping the golden ring of fame that came to other Maine regiments in the war, their perseverance was emblematic of the dogged, nay heroic, pursuit of duty.

On November 15th, 1861, James Stearns enlisted in Company E of the Twelfth Maine Regiment. The Twelfth was organized to serve for three years. The regiment was part of Gen. Benjamin Butler's New England division, designed for the capture of New



James Cutler Stearns (1840-1909)
Photo donated by Enola Buzzell

Orleans. On May 4, 1862, the regiment arrived in New Orleans, which had fallen into Union hands the week before.

Duty in New Orleans must have both fascinated and bored James Stearns and his fellow soldiers from Maine. A letter from Lt. John W. Dana of the Regiment relayed that they'd spent a safe -- and apparently uneventful -- Independence Day in the city. "We enjoyed the duller Fourth yesterday that I ever knew," he wrote to his father. "Oh! You've no idea of it. But I suppose you had great times in the North."

While in New Orleans, the regiment performed the duties typical of garrison troops through the ages down to the present day. They guarded various public

(continued on page 3)

From the President

We need to alert you that we have recently changed our membership software program, which includes our mailing list with membership status. Please check your mailing label and let us know if corrections are needed. This was a giant task of data entry and, as we are not infallible, errors may have occurred. This would also be a great time to notify us of your e-mail address. You can do so by filling out the enclosed form, and if you would like to add dues or a donation we would be very grateful!

This summer we plan to have some exciting events that we hope you will not miss. We will be presenting another "Conversations" round table discussion on June 16th, and the topic will be North Lovell. Jo Radner will be our moderator and a distinguished panel of North Lovell experts will be on hand. This talk will be held at the North Lovell Grange, right next to the Lewis Dana Hill Memorial Library, at 1 p.m.

Our Annual Dinner is planned for Monday evening, June 25th, at Ebenezer's Pub. This is a fun and delicious evening, and we hope to see you there.

We will host our 13th annual Antique Show and Auction on July 15th. We are now 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!

Instead of a house tour this August, we hope to present Lovell's first Barn Tour. The logistics are still being figured out, but if you would like to assist in any fashion please get in touch with me or Stan Tupaj, who is organizing the tour. It should prove to be an enjoyable, and unique, afternoon event.

We've made major progress over the winter organizing and adding to our collection thanks to the assistance of some great volunteers. John and Liz McCann continue to research Lovell's role in the Civil War and have written another article which is featured in this edition of *Yesterday's News*. It's hard to believe, but Irene St. Germain has completed transcribing all of our oral histories—that's over eighty tapes! Lou Olmsted and Sharon Kelly have proved invaluable in adding data to our museum software program, and Bonnie Fox has worked tirelessly updating our web site and serving as treasurer. Linda Legere continues the giant project of documenting Lovell's houses and Connie Miles continues to take on a myriad of projects. As a result of their work, and the efforts of other volunteers, we have greatly enhanced our research capabilities. Come and join us!

Best wishes, *Catherine Stone*

2012 Events

North Lovell Conversations	Saturday, June 16
Annual Dinner	Monday, June 25
Antique Sale & Auction	Sunday, July 15
Barn Tour	Sunday, August 12
Fall Harvest	Sunday, October 14
Christmas Open House	Sunday, December 16

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.

OFFICERS 2011-2012

Catherine Stone, President	Directors:
Stan Tupaj, Vice President	Lou Olmsted
Mary Heroux, Secretary	Beverly Bassett
Bonnie Fox, Treasurer	Renee Dutton

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 on the third Tuesday of every month at 2pm. 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 e-mail address is lovellhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

buildings, including the US Mint. They went on short forays to fight small squads of Confederate soldiers and guerillas, including several trips to the same location, Pass Machac. This was a pass connecting Lake Ponchartrain to the Gulf of Mexico. It seemed the Regiment returned there every few weeks to chase small Confederate forces away. The highlight of these expeditions was the capture of \$8,000 in Confederate money. One is left to wonder if they put it in the Mint.

While such expeditions were necessary, they never qualified as glorious battles against determined foes. More a break from monotony than anything else. Soldiers know that war is not about glory. Usually war is just dirty, ugly, and sickening. Literally sickening. The Twelfth Maine lost 52 officers and men in battle and 239 died of illness over the course of the war. They died of the things soldiers tended to die of in those days...dysentery, typhoid, pneumonia, measles, tuberculosis, and malaria. The common thread in all these diseases? No one knew how to cure them. While the number of deaths, 239, seems high, in fact it was relatively low when compared to other Civil War regiments, particularly in the Deep South. The 12th had conscientious officers who worked very hard to provide clean and sanitary conditions to the best extent possible. This was a good thing, because getting sick and having to go to the hospital didn't mean you were going to get better. Civil War hospitals were to be feared.

At the outbreak of the war the United States Surgeon General's office consisted of a total of 115 surgeons; 24 of these resigned to join the Confederate forces. While the numbers on both sides were quickly expanded, it was definitely a "quantity" versus "quality" focus. Nursing services were also quite primitive. The army still relied on male nurses, most of them untrained. Female nurses, when they were used, were likely to be looked down on by the surgeons but were beloved by the wounded for their compassionate care.

In March 1863, inspection reports from the Union Army reported a total of 589 hospitals as "good" and 303 as "bad or very bad"...at a time when a good hospital had no antiseptics, doctors who didn't equate dirt with infection, where anesthesia was a luxury, and drugs were inadequate. The most common non-opium drug was called "blue powder", which was taken orally and consisted of mercury and chalk. While solid numbers are hard to come by, the most reliable statistics for the Union armies give 67,000 killed in action, 43,000 died of wounds, and 224,000 died of disease. A word to the wise: stay out of the hospital.

Having apparently kept his health, Stearns, along with the rest of the 12th Maine, was transferred to

the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia after serving in Louisiana for over two years. They drew some particular attention as they marched through Washington, DC en route to Winchester, Virginia. According to the Janesville Gazette, August 31, 1864, Union Regiments loved their pets, and the 12th had something special:

"The oddest pets we have yet seen were two bears, which the 12th Maine regiment of the 19th Corps, led through the city recently. These bears were brought all the way from Louisiana, and have been in several battles. They have become perfectly tame and tractable, and march along at the head of the band, with an air that indicates they feel themselves veteran soldiers of the brain order, and that they have a character to sustain."

Leave it to Mainers to march with bears!

It was in the Shenandoah Valley that the 12th got into their toughest scrape. By the summer of 1864, the Union Army was in seeming control of the Shenandoah Valley. On September 19th, though, that was cast in doubt. According to the Regimental history:

"During the evening of the 18th (of September) the Twelfth, with the remainder of the Second division of the 19th Corps was ordered to be in readiness to make a reconnaissance to the front at daylight the next morning. When on the point of moving, the enemy attacked the extreme left of our lines, having taken the 8th Corps by surprise – driving them back thus exposing the flank of the 19th Corps...the Twelfth, being in the front line, occupying rifle pits, remained in its position until many of its number had been

(continued on page 4)



A sketch artist working at the front captured this image of the 12th Maine being flanked. The caption reads: "12th Maine 19th Corps driven out of their camp and over their earth works." AR Waud.

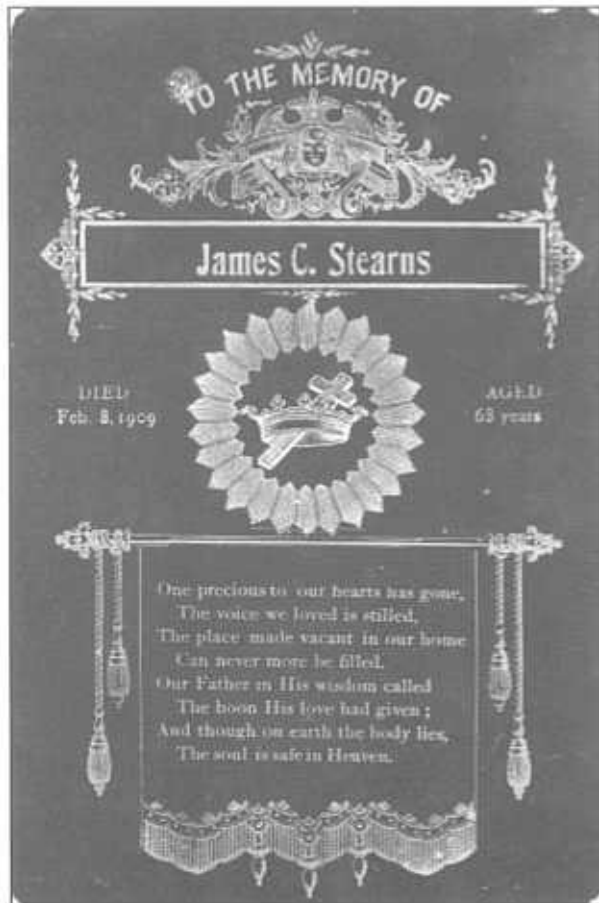
struck down by bullets coming from both the flank and rear...The Regiment then received orders to change front, which it did in good order under severe fire from the enemy...(falling) back to a position where the lines of the Corps were rearranged, and there remained until the timely arrival of General (Phillip) Sheridan in person on the battlefield....Reforming his army in one line of battle, it was pushed forward, achieving one of the most complete and decisive victories that had taken place in the Shenandoah."

In late November 1864, the Regiment, having completed their 3 years of service, returned to Portland and were officially mustered out. James returned to Lovell and lived with his sister for 3 months, then re-enlisted on March 1, 1865. Having served his full tour of duty, what led this man to decide to go back on active duty? We don't have his exact reasons, but for many Union soldiers there was a desire to see the thing through to the end. Perhaps the winter in Lovell, after serving nearly 3 years in New Orleans, and fighting with Sheridan in Virginia, seemed pretty dull stuff. In any event, he did re-enlist and was finally discharged on March 13th, 1866.

His post-war years are filled with the same sense of duty and commitment to family, friends, and community. He worked a number of jobs from Lovell to Yarmouth, finally returning to Lovell to run the Town Farm for three years. With the money from that job he was able to buy the old family farmstead where he farmed 120 acres, raising crops and running a dairy business. He married Sarah Hatch in 1867 and had four children. He is buried in the Center Lovell Cemetery.

An ordinary man in extraordinary times, James Stearns comes across as someone we'd like to know; someone we know we could count on to lend a hand when asked and to do the things that distinguish someone and make them a person of character. What defines greatness in someone? Is it great deeds, or is it a multitude of small deeds done with honor and dignity? The great deeds may be beyond our control. But tackling the small deeds with quiet determination, honor and dignity is well within our ability to control. The best amongst us, men such as James Stearns, show us how to do it.

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Lovell Men Known to have Joined
the Twelfth Maine Infantry

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|------------------|----------------------|
| George Andrews | Stephen Manson |
| Peletiah Andrews | William Martin |
| George Caldwell | John Mason |
| Henry Charles | James McKeen |
| Horace Eastman | George Moore |
| Seth Eastman | Samuel Parker |
| John Fox | James Patterson |
| Elias Gilman | Leavitt Sargent |
| Samuel Gilman | Barnett Sawyer |
| Arthur Gray | Albion Stearns |
| Marshall Gray | Austin W. Stearns |
| John Hammons | George Stearns |
| David Hastings | Henry M. Stearns |
| Libeus Hatch | James C. Stearns |
| Calvin Heald | Joseph F. Stearns |
| John L. Hill | Marcellus L. Stearns |
| Wilson Hill | Silas H. Stearns |
| John Hobbs | Timothy S. Stearns |
| William Kneeland | Osgood Watson |

Of these 38 men, 7 died of disease, 8 were discharged for disability (most likely an illness), 3 were wounded, and 2 were prisoners of war.

John “Snarval” Fox

John “Snarval” Fox was born in Porter, ME on October 29, 1838, the son of John and Clarinda (Stanley) Fox. His father had operated several water mills in Porter, sawing oak for barrel staves. It is believed that when the oak was used up in Porter, his father and five uncles moved to West Lovell, where oak trees were plentiful. His mother and father moved in 1848, settling in “the Fox neighborhood”, also known as Foxboro.

John was the fifth of ten children and, according to family lore, often complained to his father that there were too many John Foxes in Lovell. His father, wishing to remedy this problem, nicknamed him “Snarval” and the name stuck.

John’s father died in 1859, which appears to have had a lasting impact on his life. As the oldest surviving son, his obituary described his circumstances after his father’s death as follows: “When a mere boy his father died, leaving a widow and several children of whom John was the eldest [son], and at an age when other boys were at play; he was tolling early and late, caring for the mother and keeping the little family together. The sturdy youth so devoted to the home grew to manhood and through his long and useful life, he perpetuated those sterling qualities, which were manifested in those early years of his life.” It should

(continued on page 6)



John Fox (1838-1911)
Photo donated by Elmer Fox



The Fox family in front of their farmhouse
Photo donated by the John R. Fox family



Marietta (Horr) Fox (1849-1912)
Photo donated by Richard Fox

be pointed out that Snarval was a twenty-one year old "mere boy" when his father died and his "little family" consisted of seven siblings.

John married Marietta, the daughter of Josiah and Hannah (Heald) Horr and a native of Lovell, on July 24, 1861. Almost four months later he joined a large group of Lovell men and enlisted in the Twelfth Maine Regiment. His new bride stayed at her parents home until his discharge on December 7, 1864.

During the three years he served, John took part in twenty-seven engagements, including the battle

of Irish Bend, the siege of Port Hudson, the battle of Fisher's Hill, Cedar Creek, and Winchester. His obituary described his service: "As long as one of his company remains he will be remembered as the jolly lad and joker of them all, who cheered their hearts in time of impending slaughter, and sympathized with them when they were injured".

Returning to West Lovell, John and Marietta resided at her parents farm in West Lovell while he became engaged in several lucrative pursuits. He farmed his in-laws property. He rebuilt and operated the saw mill at Boulder Brook. He worked at times at carpentry, including building large post and peg barns. He built and operated a charcoal pit in Foxboro and made and fired bricks. He served as a town selectman for several years. He and his wife helped organize the West Lovell Library and John, with the assistance of Alonzo Lord, built the West Lovell Library Hall. He was a hard worker and he came to own about five hundred and thirty acres, wild and improved land.

John and Marietta had seven children. Their first-born, a daughter, died in infancy and the remaining children, all sons, assisted their father in his many endeavors. When he died on January 1, 1911 his obituary stated that he was generally known as "Honest John"—devoted husband, a loving father, and honest citizen. He was described as "a man to whom parents can point to their boys, as one honest man who succeeded. Honesty was his watchword and the sneak or indecent person with whom he came in contact were by him started aright or denounced in terms they were not apt to forget". He is buried in the West Lovell Cemetery next to his wife, who died the following year.

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John and Marietta Fox
Photo donated by Elmer Fox



Arthur M. Gray (1840-1903)
Photo donated by Barry Gilman

Arthur Gray was born July 8, 1840 in Lovell, the son of Abram and Mary (Lewis) Gray. He enlisted in the Twelfth Maine Infantry on March 11, 1865 when he was twenty-two years old and mustered out on April 18, 1866. Upon returning home he was employed as a carpenter and a farmer and for some years worked for the Grand Trunk and Bridgton railroads. He married Lucy E. Evans of Lovell on February 12, 1863. Both Lucy and his second wife Clara (Libby) Frost predeceased him. Arthur died on February 19, 1903 and is buried in the Elm Vale Cemetery in Waterford.



George W. Andrews (1843-1917)
Photo donated by Winchell & Ruth Moore

George Andrews was born in Freedom, NH on April 5, 1843 and moved to West Lovell with his parents, John and Betsy (McDonald) Andrews, as a child. At the age of seventeen he enlisted in the Twelfth Maine Infantry on November 15, 1861, as did a large number of his Lovell neighbors. He served as a drummer boy until July 15, 1862 when he was discharged for disability. He married Susan F. Brown on June 30, 1867, moved to Boston, and was in the grocery business. He retired to Lovell, building a cottage on Kezar Lake. He died on December 18, 1917 and is buried in the West Lovell Cemetery.

Gifts & Donations

We are very grateful for the following gifts received since the last newsletter: **Russell & Penny Allen**—Lovell Grammar School diploma and graduation program, photo; **Diane Brakeley**—Martha Bryant's handwriting booklet dated 1810; **Renee Dutton** (in honor of Mary Wilson)—commemorative plate for the Christian Church; **Robert & Janine Greene**—Harriman's Store postcard; **Eric Hastings**—permission to scan photos; **Earl McAllister**—sheet music; **Robert McAllister**—permission to scan Hodsdon family photos; **Gerry & Meg Nelson**—permission to scan photos; **Bruce Reeves**—Severance Lodge matchbook and key chain; **Annie Riecken**—photos of Hazel Allen's attic; **David Sanderson**—two copies of The Pirates' Den "Rules of the Deck", advertisement for The Pirates' Den menu; **Al & Jacky Stearns**—collection of early Almanacs; **Martha "Tooty" Wilson**—permission to scan a large collection of photos, Kenneth Wilson's composition book.

Cash donations have been gratefully received from: **John & Esther Atwood**; **Priscilla Beckloff** (in memory of Paul Morton); **Harold & Joyce Buckingham**; **Peter & Cary Fleming**; **Elna Hale**; **Collier Hands**; **William & Nancy Mende**; **Nancy Pratt**; **Todd & Sarah Smith**; **James & Tess Whitmore** (in memory of David Knights); **Judith Whitney**.

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.

In Memoriam

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

Shirlee "Sue" (Collens) Bommer, 83, of Yarmouth, ME and formerly of South Dartmouth, MA, passed away on March 9, 2012. She was born on May 9, 1928, the daughter of Charles and Ruth Collens. Sue grew up in Newton, MA, graduated from the Stephens College, and in 1950 married William Bommer. She was active in various charitable and local organizations, served one term as a South Dartmouth town selectman, and was an avid gardener, birder, and tennis player. She spent her summers on Kezar Lake and was a contributor to this Society. She was predeceased by her husband and is survived by her four daughters—Ruth Rosentein, Ann Flower, Dorris Bommer, and Martha Lawlor—and ten grandchildren.

James W. Swasey, 62, of Lovell died on March 12, 2012. He was born in Saco, ME on November 13, 1949, the son of Harry and Avis Swasey. He attended Bridgton High School and served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. He was the manager of the Lil'Mart convenience store in Fryeburg. Jim was predeceased by his birth father, Alginon DeMerchant, and his father, Harry. He is survived by his wife Patrice, their two children—Aaron and Jessica—and three granddaughters.

Janet (Campbell) Thompson, 63, of Lovell, passed away on January 18, 2012. She was born in Bridgton, ME on October 10, 1948, the daughter of Walter and Celia Campbell. She married her husband Harold in 1966 and worked for many years in the shoe shop in Fryeburg, ME. She is survived by her husband of 45 years, two children—Sonya Stevens and Scott—and five grandchildren.

The Lovell Historical Society
P.O. Box 166
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If your mailing label doesn't say "6-13" or "Life",
it is time to join or renew your membership. Thanks!