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# SIMSBURY

## ❖ Genealogical and Historical Research Library ❖

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### FROM THE LIBRARIAN'S DESK

What a great year! Membership is way up. The number of people using the library has increased drastically. In March, we received a new microfilm reader-printer through the generosity of the Abigail Phelps Chapter, N.S.D.A.R.. Over 400 books and periodicals were donated by Irene Welden in April. Our Spring Open House generated much excitement due to the new acquisitions. Mary Jane Springman and Peg Donohue helped to make it a success. We went on the World Wide Web in June and have heard from people from far and wide. Close to 20 people benefitted from the beginning genealogy courses taught by Dawn Bobryk. Two seminars on town records were well received. Special thanks to Carolyn Keily and Glenn Knierim for their presentations. Joyce Cahill did a wonderful job with the garden this year. We are also grateful to Jean Bishop for her effort with several new plantings in the front of the building. A cemetery project was also completed during this year with the help of Joyce Cahill, Bette Shaw, Don Shaw, Bob Lindauer, Margaret Lindauer, and Tom Sharpless. We look forward to 1998 with much anticipation. The Simsbury Genealogical and Historical Research Library will be 10 years old! As we head toward the 21st century, let's all make the next decade even better!

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*Stephen E. Simon, MLS*

## THE SWORD OF ALONZO CASE

Alonzo Grove Case was born in the old Case homestead on Terry's Plain in June 1834. He attended the one room schoolhouse close to his home, and continued his education at the Connecticut Literary Institute, Suffield and Wilbraham Academies. At the age of 25, he married Julia Chafee of Simsbury and ultimately fathered nine children. He continued to farm until 1862 when he enlisted to fight in the Civil War, and was assigned to Company E, 16th Connecticut Volunteers.

Mustered in as a private, he was promoted to the rank of First Sergeant within a year, then to Second Lieutenant, and by the time he participated in the Battle of Plymouth (Virginia) in April 1864, he was a First Lieutenant. Although wounded in the side at Antietam (the same battle that claimed the life of his younger brother, Oliver), he recovered and took part in many other battles until the fateful one at Plymouth. Shot in the foot, he was taken prisoner and confined to the infamous Andersonville Prison for several months before being transferred to prisons in Savannah and Charleston.

Alonzo's prison life covered the span of almost a year, during which time he lost 45 pounds, and like many others incarcerated prisoners, suffered from hunger and lack of clothing. He made himself clothes from flour sacks and used pieces of cloth from an old overcoat for foot coverings. Discharged after the war, he suffered from asthma for the rest of his life.

Back home in Simsbury, Case served the town for the rest of his life. He spent two years as a Selectman and another two as Tax Collector. He was a Justice of the Peace for 30 years and represented Simsbury in State Legislature in 1867. He was also a deacon of the Congregational Church, a Mason and President of the Ex-Union Prisoners of War Association.

Some twenty-three years after the battle at Plymouth, Alonzo learned that the sword he carried and lost at the time of his capture was in the possession of a Captain James A. Marrow of Clarksville, Virginia. Capt. Marrow had commanded Co. H, 55th Regiment North Carolina Troops which took part in the siege and was present at the capture of Case's garrison. Lieut. Case had been presented with the sword at his promotion to Lieutenant near Fredericksburg "by a citizen of the Town of Simsbury."

He learned of the whereabouts of his sword from the following notice published in the *New York Sun*.

*"A Sword for Lieut. Case or His Relatives*

*To the Editor of the Sun:*

*Sir:*

*I am at present boarding with Capt. James A. Marrow who during the war was Captain of Co. H Fifty-fifth Regiment North Carolina Troops. He has now in his possession a sword captured by him at the battle of the wilderness bearing this inscription on the scabbard: 'Lieut. A. G.*

**Genie Hint:** When it seems as though you have exhausted all leads, try local newspapers for notices of births, marriages and deaths. You can obtain lists of those papers in operation at the time you are searching from state libraries and historical societies. Many are on microfilm and can be obtained through inter-library loan.

**THE SWORD OF ALONZO CASE** *continued*

*Case, Co. E. 16 Regt. C.V. [Connecticut Volunteers]! Capt. Marrow will cheerfully return the sword to Lieut. Case's nearest relatives if he can obtain their address.*

[signed] *H. T. Harvey*  
*Clarksville, Va. Sept 19, 1887*"

In the Archives of the Simsbury Historical Society are two letters written by Capt. Marrow and one by H. T. Harvey to Alonzo Case in connection with the return of the sword. The first from Capt. Marrow and addressed to Lieut. A. G. Case, Simsbury, Conn. reads:

*Dear Sir:*

*Your kind and valued favor of the 20th inst. came to hand a few days ago, and as I am fully impressed with its genuineness I have decided to return you your sword without further delay. I am a true American, and have no desire to retain any relic as a triumph of Americans over Americans. I am glad to know that you are yet among the living, and I heartily join you in the desire to grasp my hand and unite with you in the prayer for peace, trusting that you may ever be happy in this life and when we "cross over the river and rest under the shade of he trees" in the Lord's Kingdom that we may know each other and enjoy peace and life eternal. Should you ever come to this section I would be glad to entertain you. Yours very truly,*

[signed] *James A. Marrow*

*Late Captain Company H, Fifty-fifth Regiment, North Carolina Troops. The sword goes by express today.*

The sword was eventually received by Case and he apparently wrote to Marrow to acknowledge its receipt because on November 9, 1887, Captain Marrow replied to Case saying he was glad the sword had been received. Marrow also wrote that he could not remember exactly how he came into possession of the weapon. "...whether one of the officers or men gave it to me. . . it has been in my possession ever since til I returned it to you."

Marrow extended an invitation to Case to visit him in Virginia to "talk over old times" and gave directions as to how to get to his residence. He suggested that Case bring along his gun as "this section abounds in game, deer, turkeys, partridges, and wild geese." He added that "I have a well-trained dog and I am very fond of hunting."

Whether Alonzo Case ever visited before his death in 1902 is unknown but today his sword rests in the collections of the Simsbury Historical Society. It is a symbol of the healing power of time in a nation once divided.

*Written by Lois W. Calvert*  
*Managing Director*  
*Simsbury Historical Society*

## *First Settlers of Simsbury*

### **John Griffin**

John Griffin is probably most famous as the man who owned Simsbury. How did he manage to accumulate such holdings? It required a Massaco Indian named Mannahanosee and the fire he "wittingly" started in the woods near John Griffin's tar and turpentine works some three hundred and forty years ago. The fire consumed a considerable quantity of tar and the General Court of Connecticut Colony order Mannahanosee to pay Griffin the munificent sum of 500 fathoms of wampun. If he failed to pay this then he could serve John Griffin or be shipped out (presumably) to the West Indies where he would be exchanged for slaves and spend out his life far from family and familiar surroundings.

The story continues that Mannahanosee was an elderly man and members of his family and tribe made a deal to satisfy the court and to keep their relative in Connecticut. They gave John Griffin - Massaco. He was then recognized as the sachem of the Massacos and used his large grant of land to hunt and fish.

By the 1660's John Griffin offered his lands to Windsor so that the town father's might distribute them among settlers. He became one of the first proprietor's of Simsbury and his lands which were still considerable were known as Griffin's Lordship.

Little is proven about John Griffin's early life. Other Griffin/Griffen families settled in Massachusetts. A line in an unattributable manuscript suggests that it was said that John Griffin was the son of the Prince of Wales. Another unsubstantiated source suggest that he was the son of John Griffin and Ann Langford and was born in Wales. The first records of John Griffin appear in Windsor in 13 May 1647 when he marries Anne Bancroft (believed to be from Swartston, England).

Once he settles in Simsbury he quickly becomes a fixture, receiving a commission in 1673 to command the trainband (early militia). He is on the 1669 freeman list for Masaco. He dies before 1680 when his wife is referred to in a document as the widow of John Griffin.

**John Griffin and Anna Bancroft** had the following children listed in the Windsor, CT Vital Records

1. **Hannah** b. 4 Jul 1649 m. **John Humphrey**
2. **Mary** b. 10 Nov 1651
3. **Sarah** b. 25 Dec 1654 d. bef 1700 m. 1 Oct 1676 **Ellias Gillet**
4. **John** b. 20 Oct 1656
5. **Thomas** b. 3 Oct 1658 d.10 Oct 1703
6. **Abigail** b. 12 Nov 1660 d. 31 Mar 1697/8 m. **Richard Segur**
7. **Mindwell** b. 11 Feb 1662
8. **Ruth** b. 21 Jan 1665
9. **Ephraim** b. 1 Mar 1668 d. 27 Sept 1725 m. **Elizabeth Holcomb**
10. **Nathaniel** b. 31 May 1673

**In coming issues this series will feature:**  
*Samuel Filley*  
*Thomas Maskell*  
*John Pettibone*  
*Joseph Phelps*

### *First Settlers of Simsbury*

## **LUKE HILL (Abt 1613/23 - 1696)**

**Luke Hill** also makes his first appearance in Windsor at the occasion of his marriage to **Mary Hoyt** on 6 May 1651. All but one of his children were born in Windsor. He purchases in 1655 a home lot in Windsor. Three years later he buys the home lot and land of **Tahan Grant** (blacksmith), son of **Matthew Grant**. In 1660 he receives a grant of land in Masaco(sic) and also purchases additional land.

His occupation appears to have been that of blacksmith and also ferryman. He ran the "rivulet" ferry at the mouth of the Farmington River on the Connecticut River. After he settles in Simsbury he runs a ferry across the Farmington at the bottom of Pent Road (now running next to Simsbury Post Office). He is listed in 1669 as a freeman of Masaco.

His land, which was a long lot running from present day Hopmeadow Street in the area of the Post Office to the Farmington River, seems to have served as a land mark and is mentioned in many of the deeds of the day.

As age and infirmity took its toll, Luke drafted a document that turned his land and personal belongings over to his son, John. In return John promised "to Continue with them during there terme of their Naturall life & provide for them as far as my ability may extend both for food, cloathing, phisick & other necessities..." In 1696 both old Mr. Hill and his wife died.

**Luke Hill** married **Mary Hoyt** 6 May 1651 and they had the following issue:

1. **Lydia** b. 18 Feb 1651/2 d. 1698 m. 1st **Arthur Henberry** 5 May 1670 m. 2nd **Richard Segar**
2. **Mary** b. 20 Sept 1654 m. **John Saxton** 30 Jul 1677
3. **Ebenezer/Eleazor** born at Farmington March 1656/7 m. Sarah Gillet 29 Dec 1679
4. **Tahan** b. 23 Nov 1659 d. 16 Dec 1692 m. **Hannah Parmelee** (dau of of **John** and **Rebecca Parmelee**) 20 Nov 1688
5. **Luke Jr.** b. 6 Mar 1661 m. Hannah(?)
6. **Abigail** b. 16 Apr 1664 m. - Parmelee
7. **Elizabeth** 18 Oct 1666
8. **John** 28 Nov 1668 m. **Jane Bushnell**

Sources: *The New England Historic Genealogy Register* Volume 5, April 1851  
*A Digest of Early Probate Records* by Charles William Mainwaring  
*The History of Ancient Windsor* by Henry R. Stiles  
*Simsbury Connecticut: Births, Marriages and Deaths from Town Records* by Albert C. Bates  
 SGHRL Family Files  
 Simsbury Historical Society Family Files

## 20 WAYS TO AVOID GRIEF IN YOUR GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH

The following suggestions and recommendations will be helpful to beginners and hopefully will prevent misfortune when learning how to do genealogical research. Many of these tips are "old hat" to experienced genealogists, but it is always worthwhile to remind ourselves of the basics of sound research.

1. ALWAYS note the source of any material you photocopy. If the information is from a library book, note the name, author, date, publisher and also the library where you found the book, or photocopy the title page. Occasionally you will find that you need to refer to the book again, or photocopy more information from it.
2. Make photocopies or carbon copies of ALL letters you write. This will save you from wondering which of your correspondents' questions you answered already, and which of your questions they have or haven't answered.
3. Don't procrastinate in responding to letters or messages you receive. If you don't have time to write a detailed reply, send your correspondent a quick reply on a postcard to acknowledge receipt and give him/her a rough idea of when a reply will be forthcoming. Then be sure to write back fully at the time promised.
4. When searching for relatives in records, don't pass over the entries that are almost but not quite right. For example, if you are searching for the marriage of John Brown and Mary Jones in 1850, make a note of the marriage of John Brown and Nancy Smith in 1847: this could be a previous marriage in which the wife died shortly after childbirth.
5. When writing to libraries or genealogical/historical societies in your areas of interest, ask them for the names and addresses of out-of-print booksellers in the area. Write to the booksellers and ask if they have any old local histories or family histories pertaining to the area.
6. Don't forget to make frequent backups of your computer disks.
7. Store backup copies of your computer disks and photocopies of your irreplaceable documents in your safety deposit box or someone else's home.
8. Remember that "if it's in print, it ain't necessarily fact." Information in recently published local and family histories is often based on that from older published works. If the older books are incorrect, the erroneous information is simply repeated and further disseminated.
9. The earlier the time period in which you are researching, the less consistent our ancestors were about the spelling of their surnames. Also, many of them were illiterate and could not tell a record keeper how their names should be spelled.
10. Family traditions of close connections to famous figures are usually false, but there may be a more obscure relationship involved. Perhaps the famous person spent a night at your ancestor's country estate instead of (as the legend goes) marrying into the family.
11. Try not to let your research get behind. Establish a filing system for your papers (using file folders or 3-ring binders) and file each page of notes, document, photocopy, etc. as you acquire it. There are few things more disheartening than contemplating a foot-high stack of unfiled papers, wondering if the birth certificate you desperately need to refer to is somewhere in it.

12. Double-check all dates to make sure they are possible, for example, a woman born in 1790 could not be a mother in 1800.
13. Be on the lookout for nicknames. A request for a birth record for Sadie White may be rejected if the name on file is Sarah White.
14. Beware of mail-order promotions offering personalized genealogies of your surname with titles such as "The Amazing Story of the BLANK Family" or "The BLANK Family New World Registry." These are usually little more than computer-assembled lists of names from telephone directories. Notify the Better Business Bureau, postal authorities and consumer advocate agencies if you receive one of these.
15. Don't assume modern meanings for terms used to describe relationships. For example, in the 17th century a step-child was often called a "son-in-law" or "daughter-in-law," and a "cousin" could refer to almost any relative except a sibling or child.
16. Remember that indexes to books rarely include the names of ALL persons mentioned in the book and, in addition, occasionally contain errors. If it appears that a book is likely to have valuable information, spend some time skimming its contents rather than returning it to the shelf after a quick glance at the index.
17. Be precise when making notes and especially when sharing information with others. Write dates using an unambiguous format: Americans interpret 5/6/1881 as 6 May 1881, but in many other countries it would be read as 5 June 1881. Always capitalize or underline surnames, some of which can be mistaken for given names, e.g., HENRY, HOWARD. Note place names in full, including parish or township, county, state or province, and country.
18. You will often encounter conflicting information and you will have to weigh it against other evidence to try to determine which is the most likely to be true. Periodically review and verify the conclusions you have reached concerning each of your ancestors' lives: this will help to prevent you from wasting time following blind alleys.
19. Place names and boundaries have changed constantly over the years. Always verify them in historical atlases or genealogical texts pertaining to the area. For example, the boundaries of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania have changed four times since it was first settled.
20. Whenever and wherever possible, advertise the surnames you are researching by submitting them to genealogical directories and surname lists published by genealogical societies that you belong to. This will put you in touch with others who are researching the same surnames, possibly for a much longer time. After all, the most rewarding genealogical research is that which no-one else has already done!

*Adapted from The British Columbia Genealogist  
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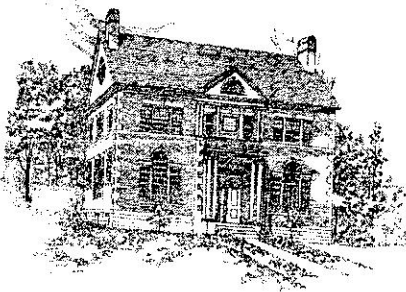
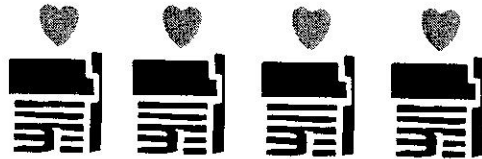
***Are you descended from a First Settler of Simsbury?*** Since this feature began we have had many requests to do something to recognize the descendants of these early residents of Simsbury? In many towns such as Hartford or Windsor there have developed programs which work to preserve the heritage of these men. We are currently soliciting suggestions from our members about beginning such a program. If you are interested please write or call Steve Simon at 860 658-5382.

## WINTER HELP SESSION

Our Librarian, Stephen E. Simon will be offering a special help session on Sunday, February 8, 1998 from 1 - 3 PM. Designed to accommodate those who have begun work but hit stumbling blocks or those who need help organizing their research.

The session is free but reservations are required. Call 658-5382 to reserve your space.

**WE WILL BE CLOSED ON DECEMBER 26TH!**



### **SIMSBURY FREE LIBRARY**

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