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14 ALBUM, Chronicle, Saturday, July 27, 2002

— HISTORY —

# Stowell Burnham: a hero of the Civil War

*(Part one of two)*

The town of Windham has a rich Civil War history, from the officers of its wealthiest farmers to Willimantic's Irish-born immigrant millworkers who bravely fought in the 18th Connecticut Volunteers.

Its Civil War heroes also includes Congressional Medal of Honor winner Sgt. William B. Hooper, who was born in Willimantic in 1841 and served with the crack 1st New Jersey Cavalry.

But one of Willimantic's most famous Civil War is Lt. Stowell Lincoln Burnham, who was killed at the Battle of Gettysburg on July 1, 1863.

Stowell Burnham was born in North Windham in 1837, the son of Luther Burnham (1800-79). The North Windham Burnhams were directly descended from John Burnham (1618-94) of England, who was awarded large acreages of Connecticut land in 1639 for his services in the Pequot

Wars. His grandson, Ebenezer Burnham (1691-1746), became a prosperous farmer at Hampton.

Ebenezer's grandson, Luther Burnham, came to North Windham in 1837 and purchased a 300-acre farm. Luther married Martha Lincoln in 1821 and the couple had seven children, of which only two would survive into old age.

Luther Burnham was one of North Windham's most prominent citizens and represented Windham in the General Assembly from 1849-51 and from 1863-67.

Luther's surviving son, Edward Burnham (1833-1909), taught school as a young man, and later went to Wisconsin to study dairy farming. He returned to North Windham and turned the family



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farm into one of eastern Connecticut's most prosperous dairy farms.

Edward Burnham's younger brother Stowell also went to the West, to Kenton, Ohio, in 1857 and purchased a farm. He married a local girl to settle down to an agrarian life, but enlisted in the 82nd Ohio Regiment in November 1861 and began a highly adventurous Civil War career. He left with his regiment for service in western Virginia in January 1862, and saw significant action under Gen. Fremont on the Shenandoah Valley.

Burnham rapidly won battlefield promotion to sergeant, and his regiment then suffered heavy losses at the Battle of Cedar Mountain.

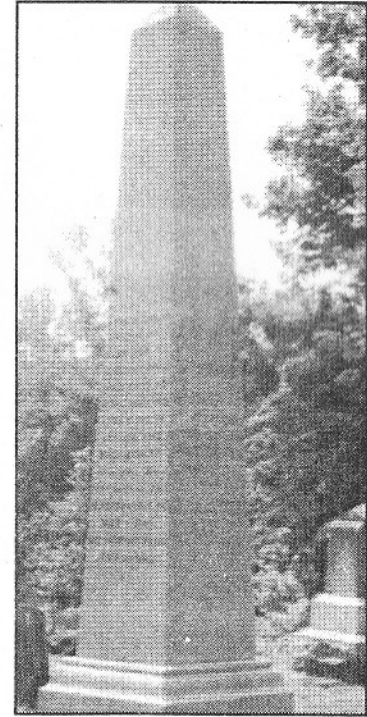
They formed the rear guard of Gen. John Pope's retreat, and were under fire for 12 consecutive days from Stonewall Jackson's Confederate forces.

Sgt. Burnham then took part in the second Battle of Bull Run at Manassas in August 1862, where

the 82nd Ohio lost over 100 men to Gen. James Longstreet's forces. After this battle, Burnham was promoted to second lieutenant, and continued to be involved in battles and skirmishes in Virginia.

In November 1862, Lt. Burnham was granted 30 days leave, and he returned to Windham to visit his family. He cut a dashing figure as he walked up Main Street in Willimantic and caught the eye of a local newspaper correspondent who quizzed him about his adventures.

Lt. Burnham said that he had been involved in 15 major battles and countless skirmishes during the previous month. Although he had many narrow escapes, he felt very lucky that he had not received a scratch in all those campaigns. However, on his return to his regiment, Lt. Burnham would be involved in two of the Civil War's most significant battles, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg.



Civil War officer Stowell Burnham's monument in North Windham.

*Continued next week.*