

Colebrook Town Papers (Genealogy, 19th c.)

There was a fair amount of correspondence between towns in the 18th and 19th centuries concerning indigent persons with each town doing their best to get out from under the responsibility of support. The reasoning behind these transcriptions is that for the most part the persons involved do not show up in any other official government form; they didn't own land, and thus did not pay town taxes, and rarely did they originate in the town attempting to avoid supporting these people, meaning that their names would not show up in the Marriages, Deaths and Birth Records ledger found in every town clerk's office. There is a slim possibility that some missing links in present-day families can be found here when everything else fails.

There are a few of these documents among the Phelps papers because at various times Arah and his son Edward were Selectmen of the Town of Colebrook, and these papers were not considered important enough to be officially saved, at least in the long term, so they would sometimes survive amongst the family documents and letters.

January 8th, 1856

Selectmen of the Town of Goshen

Gentlemen,

Please to take notice that the widow of **George Monroe, Betsey Ann, and her four children named George, [looks like] Julia Ann, Margaret Ann and Martha Ann**, all inhabitants of the Town of Goshen, and now in the Town of Colebrook on expense.

We would request you to take them to your own town, as it will be less expensive to you than to pay expenses here. We shall hold your town responsible for all expenses provided by law in such cases.

Colebrook, Jan^y 8th, 1856

E.A. Phelps
Benjamin Brown
Silas Ives

There is a small note enclosed that reads:

*“Notify Town of Goshen that Betsy Ann, the widow of George Monroe and her four children, named **George Henry, Juley [?] Ann, Margaret Ann and Martha Ann** are now on expenses, they all being inhabitants of Goshen.*

***Maiden name: Betsey Ann Cables**, married in West [looks like] Gambill [?] by Henry Griswold to George Monroe of Goshen.”*

[The town name West Granville is the only phonic match that I can think of. It is by no means unusual for names of towns and indeed families to be undecipherable in documents such as these.]

Also enclosed is a reply from Goshen. There are two words that are written quite clearly, but they are not legitimate English words as far as I can tell. I believe that the first word is intended to be "intimated", and the second "Absconded".

Goshen, Feb. 8th, 1856

Selectmen of Colebrook
Gent.

Please send us your bill for supplies furnished that Democratic family that you claim, as the father of it being antimated to us that they have absquatated.

John M. Wadhams
A Select man~~~~~ df 1

Another letter is enclosed, written by E. A. Phelps, which follows:

North Colebrook Feb. 2nd, 1856

J. M. Wadhams, Esq., 2nd Selectman
Of the Town of Goshen

Dear Sir,

I reached home on the day I left Goshen and yesterday I saw a man who lived in Hartland at the time George Rowe and wife lived there. Rowe's domicile was about 1½ miles from his. Rowe worked for him part of the time for some two years. That he was there known as George Rowe, that Henry Griswold married him, Rowe, to Betsey Ann Cables, that he knew Betsey Ann, Rowe's wife, and that the widow Rowe, now in Colebrook, is the same identified person who was the wife of George Rowe in Hartland. They recognized each other upon meeting.

I have now no hesitancy in saying that I can make out a clear case that the interesting widow Rowe and family has claims upon the Town of Goshen for support by such unquestionable proof "that no other town has power to take them from you".

Mr. Beacon called on me today and says the time they went to New Hartford from Hartland was the longest tarry [stay] they ever made in New Hartford at one continuous period, which was for a term not exceeding three years.

After you "have made such other investigations as you deem necessary and proper and shall be in a better situation to act" than when you last wrote me. We trust you will lose no time in sojourns to their long lost home.

As it will cost Goshen no more to transport them than Colebrook, we will hold ourselves in readiness to hand over on call, not requiring even the last mentioned ceremony, as I believe every town has an unquestioned right to the possession of their own paupers, wherever found.

The selectmen of Goshen will decide whether it is their most prudential course to quietly take these paupers away and pay up, or by the publicity of an investigation to sound aloud their inheritance.

Respectfully,
E.A. Phelps
Selectman of Colebrook

The following letter deals with another pauper, this time supposedly from Granby, Connecticut.

North Colebrook, Feb^y 2nd, 1856

Elmore Clark, Esq.
One of the Selectmen of Granby

Dear Sir,

Your epistle of the 7th Jan^y last reached its destination in due time.

The tenor of your remarks were of so hot a nature I would hardly have presumed to reply until they had somewhat cooled during the last three weeks of freezing wintery weather, and I hope an unfortunate brother selectman in the line of his duty may presume to address you in explanation of a simple notice written, I believe, in the usual manner that a stray pauper, which we believed belonged to the Town of Granby was in the Town of Colebrook on expenses.

The information that one George Jackson belonged to Granby was deceived from an inhabitant of your own town, whom you declare belongs no more to Granby than to China or Japan.

I confess my ignorance as to the laws relating to paupers in both of those countries, nor was I aware that the Town of Granby was surrounded by similar walls, or governed by the celestials; that you should compare her with those same barbarous nations. It had occurred to me that Granby has a resemblance rather to Colebrook and the adjoining towns; all governed by the same laws, deriving all our powers from the same source and one of those powers thus deemed permitted the selectmen of one town to protect herself from the paupers of another town by sending a letter by mail to the town when such paupers were suppose3d to belong. And for Granby, no one of her selectmen upon receiving such notice to become warmed up to boiling heat upon receiving such notice, and charging the Selectmen of Colebrook with maliciously, intentionally and designedly of giving such notice to a town, presents a case of the ludicrous by being followed up with a threat of a lawsuit for so doing, which at the very time there is a family of paupers belonging to the Town of Granby then residing in the Town of Colebrook and I should not be surprised after all your swaggering and display upon long ad - ? another notice should reach you from the Town of Colebrook stating your paupers needed care and expense.

Your threats will not deter the Selectmen of Colebrook from duty. I trust they will act as they have heretofore, not “maliciously”, though they may “designedly and intentionally”.

I would now say to Elmon Clark, Esq., one of the selectmen of Granby, that this George Jackson, who we were told was an inhabitant of Granby, has absconded to parts unknown, and that we have notified another town (not China or Japan), but a town of which we intend to prove them inhabitants of the residence of a - - ? can be over proved. With this explanation we trust

your prejudices will be allayed and the Selectmen of both towns will hereafter entertain no other than sentiments of kindness and respect.

Truly yours,

E. A. Phelps