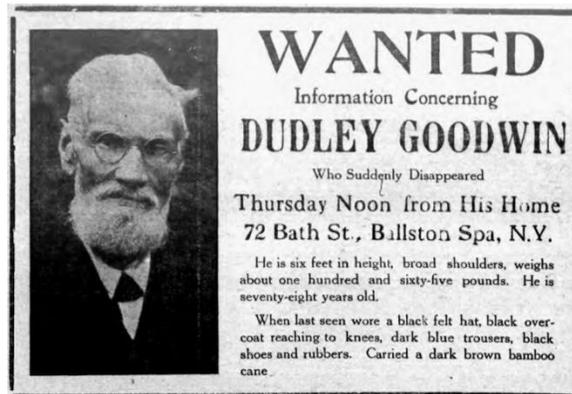


This Week in Saratoga County History

Ballston Civil War Veteran Disappears

Submitted by David Fiske March 17, 2022

David Fiske is a local historian who lives in Ballston Spa and is author of several books on the slavery experiences of Solomon Northup, Ballston Spa History Walkaround, and other topics. He can be reached at dafiske@gmail.com



*Dudley Goodwin Missing Person Notice
Source: Ballston Journal, March 22, 1922*

One hundred years ago a long-standing citizen of Ballston Spa went missing. Usually known as Dudley Goodwin, his name was sometimes given as M. Dudley Goodwin (which is what appears on his tombstone). According to information on Find-A-Grave, his first name was Madison. He was born in Fulton County, on the second day of April, 1844. A sister was also born in Fulton County, about 1841, but Dudley's other siblings were born in Saratoga County.

This could mean the family moved around, or simply that the mother, Maria, went to stay with relatives in Fulton County during some of her pregnancies. Maria was born in Vermont around 1812, but her husband died sometime before 1860, since she is listed as head of household in the 1860 census, and the 1865 New York State census indicated that she was a widow. A listing of the Goodwins in the 1850 census has proven to be aggravatingly elusive. Consequently, I have not been able to determine the name of Dudley's father.

Dudley had an older brother named George, and the 1855 State Census lists a George R. Goodwin living with a farm family in Malta. The 15-year-old was a farm laborer, who had lived in Malta since about 1848. If this George was Dudley's brother, perhaps Maria had made this arrangement sometime after the death of her husband.

The 1865 state census shows George, a farmer, and Dudley, a blacksmith, living in their mother's household in Milton. Both had served in the Civil War, both in New York's 13th Heavy Artillery regiment. Dudley enlisted, at Milton, on December 26, 1863, and George R. Goodwin, on January

2, 1864, also at Milton. A handwritten notation on an Army record says that Dudley, a blacksmith, was born in Milton, was 19 years old, and had grey eyes and brown hair, and was six feet tall. Another record shows he was promoted to Corporal in July 1865. He was mustered out the following month, at Washington, D. C.

Companies in Dudley's regiment were sent to different assignments, and there were some transfers and reorganizations, so it is difficult to say precisely where he was stationed during the war. But artillery was important in most battles, and it is likely that Dudley saw his share of action. It is also likely that he left the service with substantial hearing loss (artillerymen had no ear protectors in those days). In 1899, Dudley was given an invalid pension, indicating that he had suffered some war-related disability.

After the war, he resumed his work as a blacksmith. The 1870 census listed him as head of household in Milton, with his mom as the only other person living with him. By 1875, he had moved to the Town of Ballston was married to Latitia Peckham, with two young daughters. He was still in Ballston in 1880, but soon thereafter purchased a lot for his blacksmith shop south of the village at Academy Hill. By that time his family had expanded to include four daughters and one son. The Goodwins bore 12 children, who would be buried with their parents in the Ballston Spa Village Cemetery.

The Goodwins resided in Ballston for several decades. As they aged, perhaps keeping up the property there got to be too much. In 1920, this item appeared in the Ballston Spa Daily Journal: "Madison Dudley Goodwin, of the town of Ballston, has purchased of George Betor the Spencer house on Bath Street, immediately in the rear of the Wiley store." Not long afterwards, a notice reported that Dudley had sold his blacksmith shop and two acres of land on Academy Hill.

Tragedy befell this Civil War veteran in 1922. On March 16, he went missing. Reports were made that he had been sighted in various localities, but none panned out. No one was sure what had happened, but one person said he'd seen an elderly man on the Ralph Street bridge the day Dudley went missing. It was feared that he'd fallen in the Kayderossearas Creek and drowned, but there was no certainty about it. On March 22, 1922, the family placed a notice in the Ballston Journal, providing a photo and description of the clothes worn on the day of his disappearance. "WANTED," it read, "Information Concerning DUDLEY GOODWIN."

Weeks passed, but no new information surfaced. Finally on April 30, Dudley's body was found after his son Morton and son-in-law Garry Loomis made an intensive search. He lay partly submerged in the Kayderosseras, some two miles from the village of Ballston Spa. It was clear that he had drowned weeks earlier, likely on the day he disappeared. His wife died two weeks after his body was found, never recovering from the shock of his death. He was survived by eleven of their twelve children. It was a rather sad end for a man who served his country and was a reliable worker his entire life.