

FOUNDED ON LEGENDS OF WHIGVILLE IN BURLINGTON

by Milo Leon Norton

'Twas in the troublous times of Washington;
Our national career had just begun;
While Burlington West Britain yet was named,
Long ere sovran township's rights were claimed.
The place, a lonely spot where two roads meet;
Straight o'er Louse Hill one leads to Milford Street;
While serpentine the other down the hill,
Down by Falls Brook, where stood the clover mill.
The unpoetic settlers of that day
Dog Corner 'clept it in their homely way;
But, round this spot, as we shall shortly see,
There lingers yet a gruesome mystery;
For, on this corner, near the finger post,
to nocturn travelers appeared a ghost!
A ghost of man or women not so queer,
But this a canine ghost did there appear!
'Tis said no tourist from the land of shade
Has e'er to mortal yet appearance made,
Unless it were by virtue of some clause
Contained within the Hadean code of laws,
Which dooms to wander shades who by some crime
Have crossed the Stygian flood before their time.
Else they may come as angels from above

To bring sweet messages of light and love.
But such Plutonian laws as these apply
To shades of men and not to dogs, so I
Am still at loss to solve the mystery,
Unless I find in canine love the key.
Strong is the love of human kin or friend,
And yet the dearest love may have an end.
The wife, estranged by cruelty or hate,
May feel the love within her heart abate;
A mother may disown her wayward child;
A father hate and ne'er be reconciled.
Not so a dog. No hatred will he show,
Though stricken by a cruel master's blow.
So, if 'tis love that will admit us there,
The blest abode where deathless spirits are
Surely a canine's love, unswerving, true,
In very justice should admit him too.
But not upon the canine's future state
Is it my purpose now to speculate,
But only that mayhap it is the key
That will unlock Dog Corner's mystery.
There came unto that lonely spot one day,
A weary soldier on his homeward way,
Who sat him down upon a fallen log,
While at his feet reclined his faithful dog.
Save for some filthy rags his feet were bare;
His military coat was worse for wear;
Upon his battered hat no gay cockade;

His elbows bare were through his sleeve displayed.
For three long years he'd fought for country dear,
Ill fed, ill clad, he longed again to hear
The dear familiar voices in his home,
And from his fireside ne'er again to roam.
Thus far he'd tramped for many a weary day,
Begging his food and lodging on the way,
But now he could but little farther go;
Where'er he trod upon the yielding snow,
His feet, frost-bitten, lacerated, sore,
Would stain the spotless snow path with his gore.
Sadly he sat and thought upon the day
When he a gay young soldier marched away;
His young wife kissed good-bye, who bravely kept
A cheerful visage, though she fain had wept.
Scarce had he marched from home a single mile,
When, following slyly through the wood the while,
His dog bounced forth and would not turn him back
But followed gladly in his master's track.
Where'er they were, in battlefield or camp,
Or on the weary, long fatiguing tramp,
Master and dog together shared their crust,
Or made their bed together where they must.
The soldier sat, his aching head bent low,
Another weary step he could not go,
When from the roadway came a word of cheer,
"Aha! my friend, what are you doing here?"
A soldier, I'll be bound, and plain to see

You must have been here long awaiting me."
And so the farmer helped him to his sled,
And took him home and put him in his bed,
But on the morrow it was very clear
Smallpox had found another victim here;
And, weakened by his many hardships, these
Helped him to fall before the dread disease.
And so, ere many suns had passed away,
Stricken with death the poor, brave soldier lay.
They bore him out and laid his form to rest
Within a grave on Pine Hill's rounded crest,
Beneath the whispering pines. In time the trees,
Whose rosined odor floated on the breeze,
Before the woodsman's ax had fallen; then
The axe was followed by the husbandmen,
Until at length the unresponsive soil
scarce paid the plowman's and the reaper's toil.
Untilled, a birchen forest quickly grew,
And with its verdure clad the hill anew,
And few who know where the brave soldier sleeps,
Only an unhewn stone his memory keeps,
And no bright flowers of the sweet May bloom,
Are ever strewn upon the hero's tomb.
His faithful dog, though unobtrusive, lay
About the hearthstone in the housewife's way,
And so she drove him out with birchen broom,
Where'er he ventured in the clean swept room.
At last the poor brute came to understand

He nevermore would lick his master's hand;
And nevermore with wagging tail rejoice
To hear the cadence of his master's voice.
And soon they missed him. On one star-lit night,
While slept the earth wrapt in its robe of white,
Wrapt in its stainless, ice-wove winding sheet,
Someone passed by the spot where two roads meet.
There lay outstretched upon the snowy bed
The poor old soldier's faithful dog, stark dead!
And, underneath him, stained with human gore,
A bit of foot rag that his master wore!
In after years who passed that way at night,
Would see a spectral dog in ghostly white,
Which, though he scarcely seemed to touch the ground,
A juniper would thrice encircle round.
No sound he made, but in his canine way,
With vibratory tail would seem to say:
"My master I have lost, and surely he
Will come again this way to look for me;
I wait here till my master calls my name."
Who knows but that at last the master came?
Who knows but that these friends at last, somewhere,
These reunited friends, companions are?
And so, Dog Corner does not sound so tame,
Now I have come to know from whence the name.
Within that lonely spot where two roads meet,
I see a soldier with his bleeding feet,
Disconsolate he sits upon a log,

While at his feet reclines his faithful dog.

Later I see beside the finger post

The shadowy outlines of the canine ghost.

To me henceforth it is a sacred spot,

Whose legend nevermore shall be forgot.

Copied from "The Connecticut Quarterly", Vol. 111, 1897.

Milo Norton was born in 1849, was raised and educated in Bristol and like his father developed an interest in the early history of the area. His writings on topics of local interest appeared in such publications as the New England Farmer, the Bristol Monthly, the Connecticut Quarterly and the Connecticut Magazine. In actuality Dog Corner is the intersection where South Main Street joins with Milford Street.