

Phelps, Solomon (1762)

Held gram. del'd, Fac. Rec. II, 96; adm., 99;
139; text - books del'd, 149; cutting, 159; cuts
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UAIII 15.22

Phelps, Solomon (1762) occupied the
3rd floor, N. West chamber of Harvard Hall
with Coggin (1763) in 1759/

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Mass. 13 with Whitney (1762) in 1761/

Mass. 17 with Bent (1762t) in 1761/

Previously had roomed at Z. Borden's in 1761/

Phelps, Solomon (1762)

COND. REC. VOL. 3 #4

Granted A.M. degree 1779, #6.

SIBLEY'S HARVARD GRADUATES

VOLUME XV · 1761-1763

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF
THOSE WHO ATTENDED
HARVARD COLLEGE

IN THE CLASSES 1761-1763
WITH BIBLIOGRAPHICAL AND OTHER NOTES

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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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tendance on the public prayer," and was reprimanded both in private and in public. He survived to take both degrees, however, for the second preparing a *Quaestio* entitled *The Greatest Part of the Mass of the Human Body Consists of Fluids*.

By April, 1764, John Peck was recognized by the town of Boston as one of its responsible physicians. Later generations have confused him with a merchant of the same name who after the Revolution went to Kentucky. It was presumably the merchant who married Sarah Brewer and had several children, for when the physician died, "after a lingering illness," on March 9, 1768,² he left only one infant, John Handasyde, who became grandfather Peck's chief heir.

SOLOMON PHELPS

SOLOMON PHELPS of Marlborough, Vermont, was born in Hadley on November 5, 1740, the first son of Charles and Dorothy (Root) Phelps. Charles was a bricklayer who, self-educated to a remarkable degree, became a Justice of the Peace. At college, Solomon showed no such concentration, but changed room and roommate each year, and did not trouble to take his M.A. with his Class.

In 1764 the Phelps family moved to Marlborough with the intention of founding a college of which Solomon was to be preceptor. They built a great structure of hewed logs, with corn mills in the basement, Charles' really remarkable library on the first floor, and recitation rooms, a lecture hall, and dormitories in the upper stories. Although the college was endowed with thousands of acres of wild lands, the building was never finished, but stood for a generation in a bleak and partly cleared field.¹ The students never appeared, so Solomon preached where occasion offered, declining a call to Winchester, New Hampshire, in 1764, and supplying pulpits as far² afield as Cornwallis, Nova Scotia.²

Charles Phelps obtained a confirmation of his Marlborough grants from the Province of New York, and became a leader of the Cumberland County faction, alienating his neighbors by trying to collect the quit rents. Solomon was commissioned an attorney at law by Governor Henry Moore of New York in 1769, but in 1775 he realized that he had bet

² *Boston Evening Post*, Mar. 14, 1768, 2/3.

¹ Colonial Soc. Mass., *Publications*, XXXII, 445.

² Ecclesiastical Records (Conn. Archives), XIII, 369.

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on the wrong horse: "The people in general are almost ready to revolt from New York. Such consummate ignorance and knavery are blended in our magistrates, that they are insufferable."³ He had a reputation for brilliance and oratorical ability, and he was chosen a member of the Committee of Safety for Cumberland. He served as a captain of militia, and during the war years he preached at Marlborough. It was perhaps this which led him to take his M.A. "out of course" in 1779.

After the war the Supreme Court of Vermont ordered the seizure of the library in the log college, probably for Charles' debts, and Solomon tried in vain to recover at least his own volumes which had been taken with the rest. He had never married, and he became increasingly queer. On one occasion he tried to beat out his brains with an axe, cracked his skull, and was saved only by trepanning. In the spring of 1790 he disappeared, and it was some time before it was discovered that he had gone into a woodlot, lain down between two hemlock logs, and cut his throat.⁴

ASA PORTER

COLONEL ASA PORTER of Haverhill, New Hampshire, was born on May 26, 1742, the first son of Moses and Mary (Chadwick) Porter of Boxford. At college he roomed in Old Stoughton with Newman '62 and volunteered to inform against the use of profanity. For his M.A. he prepared the affirmative of "An homines flagitiosissimi sensum ullum virtutis retineant?"

Porter settled as a merchant in Newburyport, where on December 4, 1764, he married Mehitabel, daughter of Captain John and Mary (Savage) Crocker. The Crockers were interested in the settlement of the Coos region on the upper Connecticut, and thence the Porters migrated about 1770. In 1772 Asa was granted permission to establish a ferry across the river at Haverhill, and the next year he was appointed a Justice of the Inferior Court of Grafton County. This reflected his personal friendship with Governor John Wentworth (A.B. 1755), through whom he also obtained thousands of acres in the corner sections of the new towns which were a Wentworth family prerogative. The

³ Colonial Soc. Mass., *Publications*, XXXII, 445.

⁴ Benjamin H. Hall, *History of Eastern Vermont* (Albany, 1865), II, 692; Oliver Seymour Phelps, *The Phelps Family* (Pittsfield, 1899), I, 294.

find

A letter from Solomon Phelps to his father, Charles Phelps, Sr.

College
June 28, 1761

Honored Father, I present to you the following essay, not doubting (considering the Business you intend me for) will be quite agreeable--Deum numque ire per omnes Terrassq[ue], Tractus; Maris, Calumq[ue] profundum.

Virgil

I was yesterday about sunset, walking in the opne [sic] fields, till the Night insensibly fell upon me. I at first, amused myself with the richness & variety of colours, which appeared in the western part of Heaven in Proportion as they faded away & went out, several Stars, & Planets appeared one after another, till the whole Firmament was in a glow--The Blueness of the Ether was exceedingly hightened & enlivened, by the season of the year, & by the Rays of all those Luminaries that passed through it, the Gallaxy appear'd in a most beautiful white to compleat the scene the full moon arose, & opned to the Eye a new Picture of Nature, which was more finely shaded (here two words illegible).

As I was surveying the Moon walking in her Brightness, & taking her Progress among the constellations, a thought arose in me which often (illegible) & perpleses men of serious & contemplative Natures. When I consider the heavens the work of thy Fingers, the Moon & yr Stars which thou hast ordained; what is Man that thou art mindful of him or the Son of man that thou regardest him! in the same manner when I consider'd yr infinite host of Stars, or to speak more philosophically of Suns, which were then Shining on me with those innumerable sets of planets (illeg. wd.) of our world which were moving their respectives Suns; when I still enlarged the idea, I supposed another Heaven of Suns & Worlds residing still above this which we discovered, & these still enlightened by a superious (?) Firmament of luminaries which are planted at so great a Distance that they appear to the Inhabitants of the former as the Stars to Us: in short when I persued this thought, I could not but reflect on that Little insignificant figure which I myself bore amidst the Immensity of God's works.

Were the sun which enlightens this Part of the Creation, with all the Host of planetary worlds that move about him, utterly extinguished & annihilated, they would not be missed more than a grain of sand upon the seashore--the space they possess, is so exceedingly little in comparison of the Whole that it would scarce make a Blank in the Creation, the Chasm would be imperceptible to an eye that could take in the whole compass of Nature, & pass from one end of the Creation to another--we see many stars by the help of glasses which we do not discover with our naked eyes, & the finer Telescopes are, the more are our Dicoveries.

There is no question but the universe has certain Bounds to it; but when we consider it is the Work of an infinite Power, prompted by infinite Goodness, with an infinite Space to create (?) itself in, how can our Immagination set any Bounds to it.

If we consider God as he, is omnipresent; his Being Passes through, activates & supports the whole Frame of Nature, his Creation & every Part of it is full of him There is nothing he has made in ether (?), so distant, so little, or so inconsiderable, which he does not essentially inhabit his substance is within the substance of every Being, whether Materiall or immateriall, in Short to Speak of him in the language of the old Philosopher, he is a Being whose center is everywhere, & his circumference nowhere.

In the second place he is Omnisciant as well as Omnipresent. He cannot but be conscious of every motion that arises in the whole Materiall World, which he thus essentially pervades, & of every Thought that is Stirring in the intellutual World to every part of which he is thus intimately united.

Some have considered definite Space as the receptacle, or rather the Habitation of the Almighty but the noblest & most exalted way of considering this Infinite Space, is that of Sr Isaac Newton, who calls it the Sensorium of the Godhead.--were the soul separate from the Body & with one glance of thought, should start beyond the Bounds of the Creation; Should it for millions of years continue its Progress through Infinite Space, with ye same activity, it would still find itself within the Embrace of its Creator, & encompassed round with the Immensity of the Deity.

For this consideration of God Almightye, Omnipresence & Omniscience, every uncomfortable Thought vanishes. We (?) cannot but regard everyThing that has Being, especially such of his Creatures, who fear they are not regarded by him, he is privy to all their Thoughts, & to that Anxiety of Heart in particular which is apt to trouble them on this Occasion: for as it is impossible he should overlook any of his Creatures, so we may be confident he regards, with an Eye of Mercy, those who endeavour to recommend themselves to his Notice, & in an unfeigned Humility of Heart, think themselves unworthy that he should be Mindful of them--

Sr If what is here wrote, should afford you any Pleasure in some Leasure Moments, should think myself highly honourd who remain with all filiall Gratitude your Dutiful Son S. Phelps

P.S. Pleas to kep this Letter Safe till I come up

N.B. Brother Charles can give you the English of My Lattin Motto.