

Captain Jesse Augustus Gove
Possible Member of Rocky Mountain Lodge No. 205 A.F.&A.M.
by George F. Winters, Historian



Though he was not a charter member of Rocky Mountain Lodge No. 205 A.F.&A.M., Jesse Augustus Gove was stationed at Camp Floyd between 1858 and 1861 and was a Master Mason and Past Master prior to arriving in the Utah Territory¹. Samuel H Goodwin mentions Jesse Gove as a possible visitor to the Lodge, and it is just speculation until we can discover the lost minute books or Tyler's register of Rocky Mountain Lodge. Captain Gove was a prolific and descriptive writer. The collection of his letters to his wife which have been bound and published by the New Hampshire Historical Society offer a firsthand look into military life of the time². Unfortunately for those interested in research of camp life during 1859 and 1860, his wife and children joined him at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas late in 1858 while on leave and his letter writing to her understandingly ceased. Photograph of Captain Jesse A, Gove shown at left.

Jesse A. Gove was born in Weare, Hillsborough County, New Hampshire on December 6, 1824, the son of Squire Gove (1791-1881) and Dolly Atwood (1793-1872). He had 8 siblings: Adaline M Gove (1817–1906), Charles Ransom Gove (1820–1901), Almena Eaton Gove (1822–1825), Almena Eaton Gove (1822–1825), Squire Lawrence Gove (1827–1911), Mary Almena Gove (1830–1832), Elijah Atwood Gove(1832–1922), and George Sumner Gove (1835–1858).

In 1845, he entered Norwich University (Norwich, Vermont, the Military Academy), but interrupted his studies in 1847 to serve in the Mexican War, first as a Second Lieutenant, then as a First Lieutenant, in the 9th U.S. Infantry Regiment. At the close of the war, the 9th U.S. Infantry was disbanded. After the war, he returned to Norwich and graduated with a B.S. degree in 1849³.

Gove then moved to New Hampshire, he took up the study of law at the Concord New Hampshire law offices of Pierce & Minot, of which Franklin Pierce (soon to become President of the United States) was the senior partner. Gove was admitted to the bar in 1851. In 1852, he married Maria Louise Sherburne (1830-1906) of Concord and they had two children a son, Charles Augustus Gove (1854-1933) and a daughter, Jessie Ridgely Gove (1856-1929). At Concord, Gove was a member of Blazing Star Lodge No. 11, Receiving his Master Mason degrees on September 16, 1855⁴ and a member of Mount Horeb Commandery, Knights Templar.

In 1855, Gove returned to military service, being commissioned Captain, Company I, 10th U.S. Infantry Regiment, by President Franklin Pierce. Gove served in Minnesota where his daughter Jesse is born, before traveling to the Utah Territory starting in 1857 with Company I, 5th Infantry.

Shortly after troops started arriving at the site that would become Camp Floyd, Captain Gove is granted 6-Months leave and special assignment by Special Order no. 63, commencing on August 5th, 1858⁵. He travels east to Fort Leavenworth Kansas to meet his wife and children and they all travel back to Camp Floyd arriving by September 3, 1859⁶. Captain Gove would certainly have been aware of the Masonic Lodge on post, and he may have attended meetings if not joined the Lodge.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Gove's regiment was still garrisoned in Utah, however he returned to Washington in the summer of 1861 to seek a more active post.

On October 28, 1861, Gove replaced Col. Henry Wilson as commander of the 22nd Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry. Gove was the only Regular Army officer to command that regiment. When Gove took command of the 22nd, the regiment was fresh from Boston, having arrived in Washington, D.C. just weeks before. Gove took advantage of the next four months to rigorously train his regiment while they were in winter camp at Halls Hill, Virginia just outside Arlington. 1st Lt. John Parker, the regimental historian of the 22nd, wrote that Col. Gove⁷:

“...soon became the idol of the regiment. A thorough tactician, with the bearing of a courageous soldier, he impressed the men with the idea that he was a leader it was an honor to follow. No order of his was ever questioned, much less disobeyed, because every man in his command believed that the colonel could not make a mistake and always meant what he said.”



In what became known as the Seven Days' Battles, on June 27, 1862, at Gaines's Mill, Virginia, Colonel Gove was shot through his heart by a minie ball and died instantly. One of his non-commissioned officers, Sargent Marshall S. Pike, who had been taken prisoner of war, recognized the body and removed the colonel's belt, which he later presented to Colonel Gove's widow, but due to the circumstances, could not recover the body. If Colonel Gove's body was ever buried, it was not marked by name⁸.

In June 1866, the Seven Pines National Cemetery opened graves to reinter Union soldiers who had died at the Battle of Fair Oaks Station, Savage's Station, and other locations within the surrounding area. Of the more than 1,300 Union soldiers buried here, only 150 were identified; the rest remain unknown⁹.

Colonel Gove's widow Maria, donated one his swords to Blazing Star Lodge No. 11 where it remains on display, pictured to the left.

Acknowledgements.

Kristin Cook, Collections Access Librarian, New Hampshire Historical Society, Concord New Hampshire

Brother Marc Gelinas, Blazing Star Eureka Lodge No.11, Concord, New Hampshire

¹ FREEMASONRY IN UTAH Rocky Mountain Lodge No. 205 A.F.&A.M, S. H. Goodwin, 1934, page 21.

² The Utah expedition, 1857-1858; letters of Capt. Jesse A. Gove, 10th inf., U. S. A. to Mrs. Grove, and special correspondence of the New York herald. Concord, N.H., New Hampshire Historical Society, 1928.

³ Parker, John L. (1887). Henry Wilson's Regiment: History of the Twenty-Second Massachusetts Infantry. Boston: Rand Avery Co.

⁴ Blazing Star Lodge No. 11 Masonic Certificate dated 1855, Collection of New Hampshire Historical Society

⁵ U.S., Returns from Military Posts, 1806-1916 Utah Crittenden, Fort 1857 Jan - 1861 May, Post Return of Camp Floyd for August 1858.

⁶ U.S., Returns from Military Posts, 1806-1916 Utah Crittenden, Fort 1857 Jan - 1861 May, Post Return of Camp Floyd for September 1859.

⁷ NORWICH UNIVERSITY: HER HISTORY, HER GRADUATES, HER ROLL OF HONOR compiled by William A. Ellis (Concord, N.H., 1898), pp. 301-02

⁸Colonel Jesse A. Gove, U.S.A. fell at Gaines' Mills, June 27,1862. Published 1870. available online;
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044086286218&view=1up&seq=1> visited July 25, 2019

⁹https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/Virginia/Seven_Pines_National_Cemetery.html visited August 12, 2019