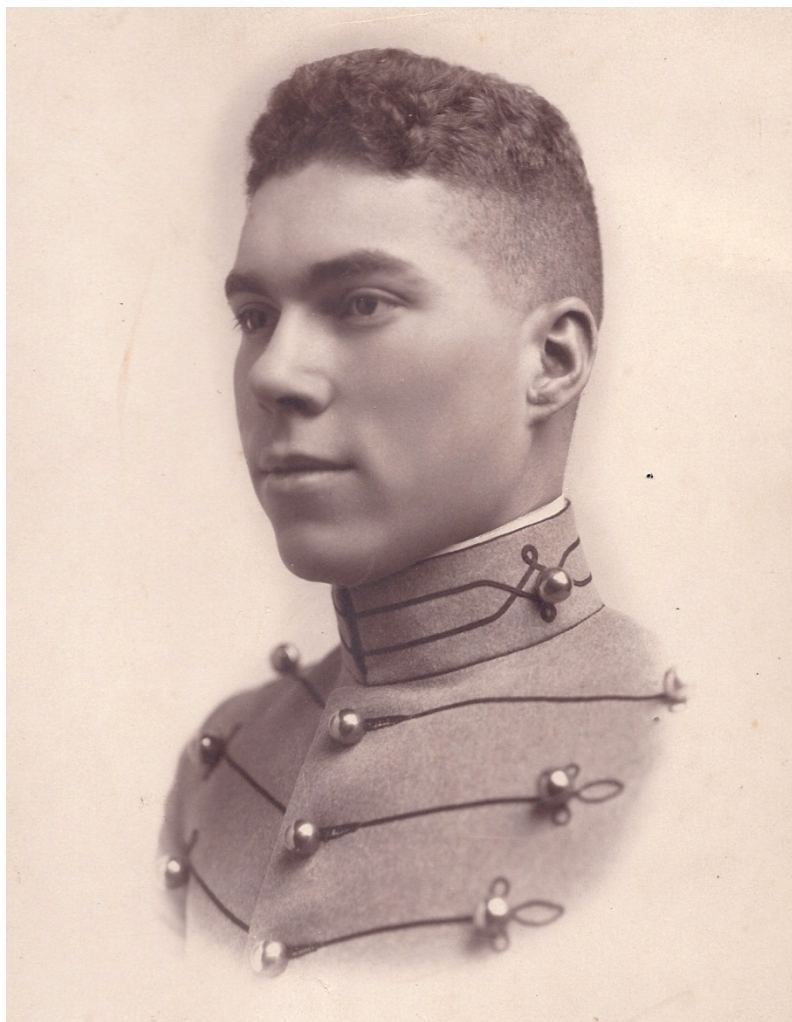


UNKNOWN FRIENDS OF H. P.
LOVECRAFT: No.3, DAVID HORN
WHITTIER

by Randy Everts

*annotated and slightly revised
by David Haden*



David Horn Whittier. Collection of Randy Everts.

Some of Lovecraft's early correspondences were rather fleeting, such as those he had via occasional spats in the pages of amateur press journals. As such they are basically unknown, or else very little is known of them. For instance, one such correspondence began in October 1915 when the 25 year old H. P. Lovecraft gave a sarcastic response in print to a young man by the name of David H. Whittier, and titled it "The Youth of Today"...

"The aggressive intellectual tone of the rising generation is indeed refreshing. Without the encumbering polish of former ages, the schoolboys of today fear not to speak as they think, and to attack dissenting opinion whenever and wherever they encounter it. Seldom has *The Conservative* enjoyed a livelier or more unexpected pleasure than that which followed the sending of his first issue to a youthful United recruit, Master David H. Whittier, who has just graduated from a prominent Boston high school [...] he sent *The Conservative* a long, bitter, and unsolicited criticism of the (March 1915) article on pan-Teutonism as soon as he had read it."

The short article¹ continued in the same sarcastic vein, stating that Lovecraft's "The Crime of the Century" essay of April 1915² was not designed for the "involved intellect"³ of the Bostonian type. Nonetheless, Lovecraft publically gave permission to Whittier to quote from his letters...

¹ "The Youth of Today" can be read in full in *Collected Essays I: Amateur Journalism*, p.74.

² Not to be confused with the Lovecraft poem "The Crime of Crimes: Lusitania, 1915". The full essay appeared in the first issue of *The Conservative*. There Lovecraft had praised his race's...

"vast superiority to the rest of mankind [...] we can find no possible excuse for denying his actual biological supremacy. In widely separated localities and under widely diverse conditions, his innate racial qualities have raised him to preeminence. There is no branch of modern civilisation that is not of his making. [...] The division of such a splendid stock against itself [in the First World War], each representative faction allying itself with alien inferiors, is a crime so monstrous that the world may well stand aghast."

³ This appears to imply an intellect involved with matters of the world, rather than of the spirit. Possibly the phrase arises from 18th Century explication of the concepts of Walter Burley...

"two further distinctions are introduced [in terms of defining the typology of truth] regarding the nature of the involved intellect (divine or human) and the

“Mr. Whittier has requested permission to use in print certain portions of *The Conservative’s* letters to him.⁴ This permission is hereby granted with extreme pleasure, since no pursuit is more gratifying than that of helping a worthy youth to shake off his natural timidity, and to come forth fearlessly into the United’s public eye as a controversial giant.”

Where had Whittier intended to publish these letters? To try to discover that we shall have to delve into Whittier’s biography. Lovecraft probably never met and never really got to know David Horn Whittier personally, other than as one of his multitudinous amateur journalism correspondents and perhaps as a critic of Whittier’s fledgling fiction.⁵ By the time of

type of mental act involved (apprehension or composition)...” (from *A Companion to Walter Burley: Late Medieval Logician*, 2013).

⁴ Possibly Lovecraft’s letters were briefly quoted from in the amateur journal *The Looking Glass* of May 1916, which contained David H. Whittier’s essay “Something”. This was at the time deemed... “a thoughtful analysis of conditions in the United, with suggestions for improvement.” (Dept. of Public Criticism, *United Amateur*, June 1916).

⁵ Whittier published two short stories in the amateur journals. The first was “A Story” in *Toledo Amateur*. Lovecraft critiqued this in “The Department of Public Criticism” of the *United Amateur* of June 1916...

““A Story”, by David H. Whittier, possesses a tragical plot whose interest is slightly marred by triteness and improbable situations. Of the latter we must point out the strained coincidence whereby four distinct things, proceeding from entirely unrelated causes, give rise to the final denouement. [...] In an artistically constructed tale, the various situations all develop naturally out of that original cause which in the end brings about the climax; a principle which, if applied to the story in question, would limit the events and their sequences to those arising either directly or indirectly from the wrong committed by the father’s enemy. [...] It must, however, be admitted that such quadruple coincidences in stories are by no means uncommon among even the most prominent and widely advertised professional fiction-blacksmiths of the day. Mr. Whittier’s style is that of a careful and sincere scholar, and we believe that his work will become notable in this and the succeeding amateur journalistic generation. The minuteness of the preceding criticism has been prompted not by a depreciatory estimate of his powers, but rather by an appreciative survey of his possibilities.”

Whittier’s second story was “The Bond Invincible”, published in *The Conservative* in October 1916. This story appears to bear some trace of Lovecraft’s tutelage, plot re-shaping, and possibly his slight revision at the end. “The Department of Public Criticism” (meaning, Lovecraft), wrote of the story in the *United Amateur* of March 1917...

“The Bond Invincible,” by David H. Whittier, is a short story of great power and skilful construction, suggesting Poe’s “Ligeia” in its central theme. The

Lovecraft's first overnight trip to Boston, David Horn Whittier was married, had fathered a child and was a graduate of West Point Military Academy, in partial fulfilment of a longtime desire to become a soldier. We might then ask how can Whittier have objected to Lovecraft's essay on war? It would surely be because of Lovecraft's racist stressing of the Teutonic angle in the conflict, for the photograph I was sent of David Horn Whittier by his son shows a man who looks to be African-American. Actually, I did not learn the truth of his appearance by the letter his son wrote to me in 1973. I learned of it only recently, from an article his son wrote. In an interview for the *Boston Sunday Herald* on 26th July 1959, David Horn Whittier, Jr. (who is indeed a descendant of John Greenleaf Whittier, a fact Lovecraft had referenced with his usual sardonic tone in "The Youth of Today") said that his grandmother, David Sr.'s mother, was an Indian princess of the Algonquin tribe (but the reported misascribed this to Jr.'s wife's mother). If that family tree was correct, then therein may lie the source of David Horn Whittier, Sr.'s appearance.

David Horn Whittier was born in Dedham, Massachusetts, on 27th May 1897, placing him in Lovecraft's own "rising" generation. He was the son of George Washington Whittier who married Maggie Alice Stack at age forty-one. Maggie was born in St. John, New Brunswick, Canada. She was sixteen years younger than her spouse, and likely a member of the Maliseet tribe of the Algonquin people. By the 1900 Census the family had removed to Boston, where the father engaged in real estate work.

plot is developed with much dexterity, and the climax comes so forcibly and unexpectedly upon the reader, that one cannot but admire Mr. Whittier's mastery of technique. Certain overnice critics may possibly object to the tale, as containing incidents which no one survives to relate; but when we reflect that Poe has similarly written a story without survivors, ("The Masque of the Red Death") we can afford to applaud without reservation. The complete absence of slang and of doubtful grammar recommends this tale as a model to other amateur fiction-writers."

S.T. Joshi, in *I Am Providence* (p.113), calls Whittier "a young protégé" of Lovecraft, and notes that Whittier was put forward by Lovecraft to replace him in the post of First Vice-President in UAPA. Whittier won the post but withdrew in October 1916, presumably to devote himself to his military prospects in the Massachusetts National Guard, in timely anticipation of America's entry into the First World War in early 1917.

Their son David attended the Mechanics and Arts High School in Boston and one wonders if he might possibly have quoted from Lovecraft's letters in the school magazine. While still at High School David was recruited to the United Amateur Press Association, so his exchange with Lovecraft must have taken place prior to his graduation of June 1915. Since it took several months for Lovecraft to receive back the typeset issue of *The Conservative* from the "gentle grafter" (as Sonia Lovecraft called him) E. Eric Ericson in Wisconsin. [Incidentally, Eric Edward Ericson was born in Elroy, Wisconsin on 1st October 1879 and as an adult he is listed as a Printer in all Censuses. He married Hazel Joseph (1883-1977) in North Dakota on 22nd December 1910, and his widow recalled to me that she recognized the name of Lovecraft as one of his printing patrons. He died in Mendota State Mental Institution on 18th March 1935, after an eighteen-month stay].

With the U.S. entry into the war approaching, David Horn Whittier joined the Massachusetts National Guard.⁶ This was a springboard toward his lifetime desire to enter the elite West Point military academy. He succeeded in the National Guard and entered West Point as a Cadet on 14th June 1917. At West Point, David Whittier ('Whit' as he was called) was an excellent student and an expert fencer, cheerful and popular with his classmates.⁷ On 11th June 1919, David Horn Whittier married 19-year-old Sophie Louise Scott (1899-1983) at West Point, on the very day his Class of 1919 graduated. David Horn Whittier had been commissioned on 1st

⁶ Shortly before this, David Horn Whittier is listed as taking a course for teachers at Boston University 1915-16 (*Boston University Year Book 1915-16*). Presumably this was a career backstop, in case he failed to enter the elite West Point via the Massachusetts National Guard.

⁷ Whittier appears to have been active in amateur affairs until early 1919, when he recruited Miss Alice Hamlet. This led to Lovecraft attending the 1919 Dunsany lecture in Boston, with Hamlet and her aunt, an event of which Hamlet remembered...

"As I remember him [Lovecraft] he was tall and large-boned—with a long jaw—or perhaps I should say chin—from the lower lip downward. He was rather dark complexioned [meaning, hair] and was extremely pale [of skin]. Evidently he was not in very good health. He had severe headaches and never was known to go far from his home—except to hear Lord Dunsany at my invitation. ... I never considered Mr. Lovecraft handsome and I am sure he was never interested in me as a *girl!*" (For the full letter, see R. Alain Everts, "Lovecraft and Lord Dunsany", 1979, now online at www.hplovecraft.com).

November 1918, but when the Armistice for World War One was signed ten days later, the entire class was sent back to West Point.

In late June of 1919, after his honeymoon, David served for three months on a tour of the European battlefields with the American Expeditionary Forces. While there, on 21st July 1919, 'Whit' was assigned to the Coast Artillery Corps. On 1st October he was enrolled as a student officer at the School located at Fort Monroe, Virginia. There he was promoted to First Lieutenant on 15th October, and he graduated exactly one year later. His wife had already removed to Fort Monroe, and it was there that 'Whit' and Sophie's first child, David Horn Whittier, Jr. was born on 10th July 1920. 'Whit' was then on duty at Fort Andrews in Boston Harbor from his graduation until 20 January 1921, when he was sent to Corozal, Canal Zone [Panama] where his wife joined him. 'Whit' and his wife remained there for three years, and while there his second child, daughter Patricia was born in July 1922. Mother and children remained there until 18th November 1923 when Sophie and the two children returned to West Point. On 25th January 1922, 'Whit' was transferred to the Ordnance Department and in June of that year, 'Whit' was enlisted as a student officer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.⁸

On 4th June 1925, while at MIT, David Horn Whittier died in the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston. He had been in a car accident ten days earlier at Coolidge Corner in Brookline, Massachusetts (at the intersection of Beacon and Harvard Streets, not far from the birthplace of President John F. Kennedy). One man was killed outright, and the driver of the other car was also placed in hospital. David suffered multiple injuries. He was only 28 years old. On 28th July 1925, his widow filed for her husband's military pension.

In 1973, Whit's son questioned his mother about Lovecraft and his father's writings. Unfortunately, neither materials nor memories prior to his wife marrying him could be recalled. The son examined...

⁸ Presumably to help recruit MIT graduates for the Ordnance Department, which probably had a strong need for good mathematicians and scientists.

“old scrap books, letters and other memorabilia (most of which deal with West Point and the few years immediately afterward) and find absolutely nothing that would testify to any special interest in writing, much less copies of published material or any reference whatsoever to *The Conservative* or to Mr. Lovecraft... I have plumbed the depths of my mother’s memory. She recalls nothing of any relevance to your interest. His letters, written from France to my mother, demonstrate a keen observer’s eye and passages of some literary ability—but that’s about all.”

David Horn Whittier, Jr. posits that childhood artifacts might have remained with his grandmother Maggie Whittier, in her house in Boston at 7 Goodwin Place. However, his grandmother remained there until 1947 when it was sold and she, in her early 80’s, eloped to California with a much older man. All “impediments”, as the grandson calls them, may have been thrown out at that time.

THE BOND INVINCIBLE⁹

By David H. Whittier

The laws of Infinite Goodness are not always manifested in those accustomed ways which we deem so inevitable, nor are their noblest operations always to be sought amidst those scenes of splendour where the tide of life flows with greatest strength and swiftness. Their deepest truths are oftentimes set forth among the humblest of men; for verily, they are no respecters of persons.

In a little town there once lived a youth and a maid who bore a mutual affection so strange and so intense, that not only did their neighbours marvel, but they themselves could scarce comprehend its singular and engrossing nature. From infancy the two had grown up side by side; every day drawing closer together, and becoming more and more occupied with thoughts of each other, till at length their fondness excluded many seemingly more important, and certainly more material needs and interests. Each was widely noted for a certain quiet goodness of heart, and each deserved the reputation; for all their thoughts and acts were pure beyond the common standards of mankind. They lived only for each other, and their thoughts were only of each other.

⁹ My suspicion is that Lovecraft has slightly revised the ending of this story, adding a few lines such as... "Down from the cloven empyrean shot a dazzling shaft of supernal radiance". Also that he has inserted, or suggested the insertion of the passage...

"...he withdrew from the village to lead a hermit's life in the neighbouring wood. For many years his existence was a strange one. He ate, and slept, and thought; but of these three things he thought the most, eating and sleeping only that he might think the better. He lived in a sphere of his own, above and beyond the world in which he seemed to live. The few who passed by his sylvan abode would sometimes behold him, walking slowly and calmly, with a strange, inscrutable smile of expectation on his lips; and they would wonder what it was that he expected, for to them his life seemed a blighted, wasted thing, and his mind, almost a blank."

An alternative explanation would be that this passage was inspired by something in Lovecraft's letters, in which he had recounted to the young Whittier a few details of his own reclusive teenage years.

But one day a malignant demon interfered, where all before had been in the hands of God. The maid, stricken with a malady which defied the efforts of rural healers, declined with fatal rapidity toward the valley of shadows. Shortly before the end her lover reached her side, sinking by the deathbed with a silent apparent calm which revealed but little the inward fear and utter vacancy brought to his sensitive spirit by the dire calamity. He held her in his arms as her soul prepared to leave him, and as she crossed the portal of this world she whispered of her devotion, vowing that nothing in the land beyond might have power to divide them, or to draw them farther apart than they had ever been. He kissed her lips for the last time, and then the shadow fell, leaving him alone, utterly alone in space; for the world of men had never been with him, and he had lost the only world that was truly his.

They laid the maiden to rest beneath the green grasses of the hillside, whilst the youth wandered aimlessly through the village and the woods and fields nearby, in a strangely vacant mood which never seemed to lift. The good folk of the town often tried to speak to him, but their well-meant words caused only annoyance, and they were always repulsed; though never with roughness, for his sorrow had mellowed his nature, and made his kind heart even kinder than it had been before. His thoughts were ever outside the things about him; and though he seemed to talk sometimes, and even to try to smile, his inmost being held no real communion with those of this world. His mind was with the other, so far away, and yet so near to him in his hours of pensive solitude. His only peace came when he was alone, and thinking of her; so ere long he withdrew from the village to lead a hermit's life in the neighbouring wood. For many years his existence was a strange one. He ate, and slept, and thought; but of these three things he thought the most, eating and sleeping only that he might think the better. He lived in a sphere of his own, above and beyond the world in which he seemed to live. The few who passed by his sylvan abode would sometimes behold him, walking slowly and calmly, with a strange, inscrutable smile of expectation on his lips; and they would wonder what it was that he expected, for to them his life seemed a blighted, wasted thing, and his mind, almost a blank. They knew, as did most of the villagers, that always he was helping others, and that many owed

to him all their happiness in life. Sufferers, oppressed by lack of money or of some less material comfort, found in him a source from which seemed to flow the love and solace of God. In numbers they flocked to him, yet was none turned away. For himself he appeared to do nothing. His life was lived for others, yet he smiled and seemed to have hope of that peace which goodness brings to all who are able to rise to the heights of ascetic self-abnegation.

One day there came within the wood a caravan of wandering gypsies, who encamped as though for a long sojourn. Among their number was a girl of very singular characteristics; so young that she seemed scarce grown to that age when the mind reflects upon things unseen, yet withal so much given to deep musing, that she would frequently detach herself from the others, and sit for hours in silent, thoughtful solitude. Whenever the band made camp, this girl would withdraw from the scene of noise and bustle, for activity wearied and sickened her, imparting a strange loneliness as though some vital part of her, close to the heart, were missing. The gypsies respected her moods and feebleness, and never demanded from her that labour which falls to the lot of most gypsy women. They thought her strange, and even mad, though no one had the cruelty to say so openly; for in their rough way they loved her much, and were loath to wound her sensibilities.

This night the gypsy maid wandered forth as always from the busy tribe as they prepared their encampment; but her slow and aimless steps were not quite as of yore, nor did she feel that sense of pain which was wont to harass her so poignantly. It rather seemed to her that all was but a blank, and she a phantom looking upon vacancy and seeing all in nothing. At length the sky grew dark, and many clouds, as though gathered from all quarters of the heavens, hung black and low over the wood. The girl, hardly able to guide her footsteps in the feeble light, seated herself upon a boulder and became lost in meaningless meditations. The wind now arose, increasing in violence till a veritable torrent of rushing air tore its way through the trees with a din whose weirdly wonderful cadences spoke a terrible intensity and soul-stultifying meaning. And as the wind waxed in fury, so waxed some vital spark within the frail breast of the gypsy. Her heart was filled with a strange

and fathomless longing, and she was irresistibly forced to rise and walk ahead toward an unknown goal. Directed and impelled by her surging soul, she forged ahead through the sheets of pouring rain and the blasts of roaring wind; yet to her mind came only an added sense of calm, and a vague thought of impending great events.

But the nomad girl was not alone in the storm-racked wood. Inspired with a like premonition of coming prodigies, the hermit also was astir, treading the familiar forest aisles and hearing in the scream of the tempest a half-formed prophecy that ere this night should pass, some wonder supernal should be wrought in him. The storm abated nor, but swelled to great proportions. The trees swung their wild arms above the hermit's head, the while shrieking aloud their approval of destiny and its onward march of events. On walked the man, until it seemed to him that some inward greatness, some high ethereal vapour, was pressing for escape and well-nigh stifling him. Yet through it all was a warmth as though a furnace were being born, whose fire scorched with an ardour that he felt not as most of us feel heat or cold.

The two that wandered in the wood alone, for on such a night as this no forest creature dares breast the wrath of the gale, were now walking toward each other as swiftly and directly as though drawn together by an intangible but invincible cord of destiny. Knowing not whither their progress led, save as intuition hinted, each pressed onward with vague haste. Suddenly they met and paused, exalted by a fervent glow whose cause the darkness hid. Then all at once the glade was lit by a lightning flash whose fleeting effulgence laid bare the minutest details of the momentous scene. Face to face in mutual scrutiny stood the two, the godly hermit and the gypsy girl, who until that instant had never beheld each other's countenance. And now came to pass a marvel so great that the mind reels in the telling. Ere the flash had died away the man and the maid stretched forth their hands in an involuntary gesture of complete comprehension and recognition; and there, amid the wild tumult of the storm, came together once more the two souls that were all to each other, and that not even death had been able to sever. In reverent awe they embraced more closely than ever lovers embrace when

they most grit their teeth and press each other to their bosoms with a passion which could never animate these two. Their love had always been the same. And as they stood there in sanctified silence, the heavens burst in twain. Down from the cloven empyrean shot a dazzling shaft of supernal radiance such as man had never seen before nor has seen since. A new, unearthly sort of day bathed for a second the forest and the neighbouring village; a day in whose instant of duration were heard celestial sounds like to none whereof men know. And when the skies had closed once more upon the holy light, behold—the inky clouds rolled gently apart from above the wood, and the pale moon, soft virgin queen of night, played with sweet argent archery upon two bodies stretched out side by side, with smiles upon their lips and faces, and with a lingering trace of the sureness of heaven in their open but unseeing eyes. Great was the storm, and mighty the power that had shewn itself to all in the fury of the elements; yet was there revealed that night a power which, though manifest only to the two who were found so cold and silent, did in greatness surpass all the tempestuous forces so vividly displayed; even as the glory of Heaven surpasseth the splendour of earth. There is more power in the smallest thought of God or Good than there can ever be in the whole wide universe we see; even were all the various forces of that universe to be miraculously joined for a single purpose.

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