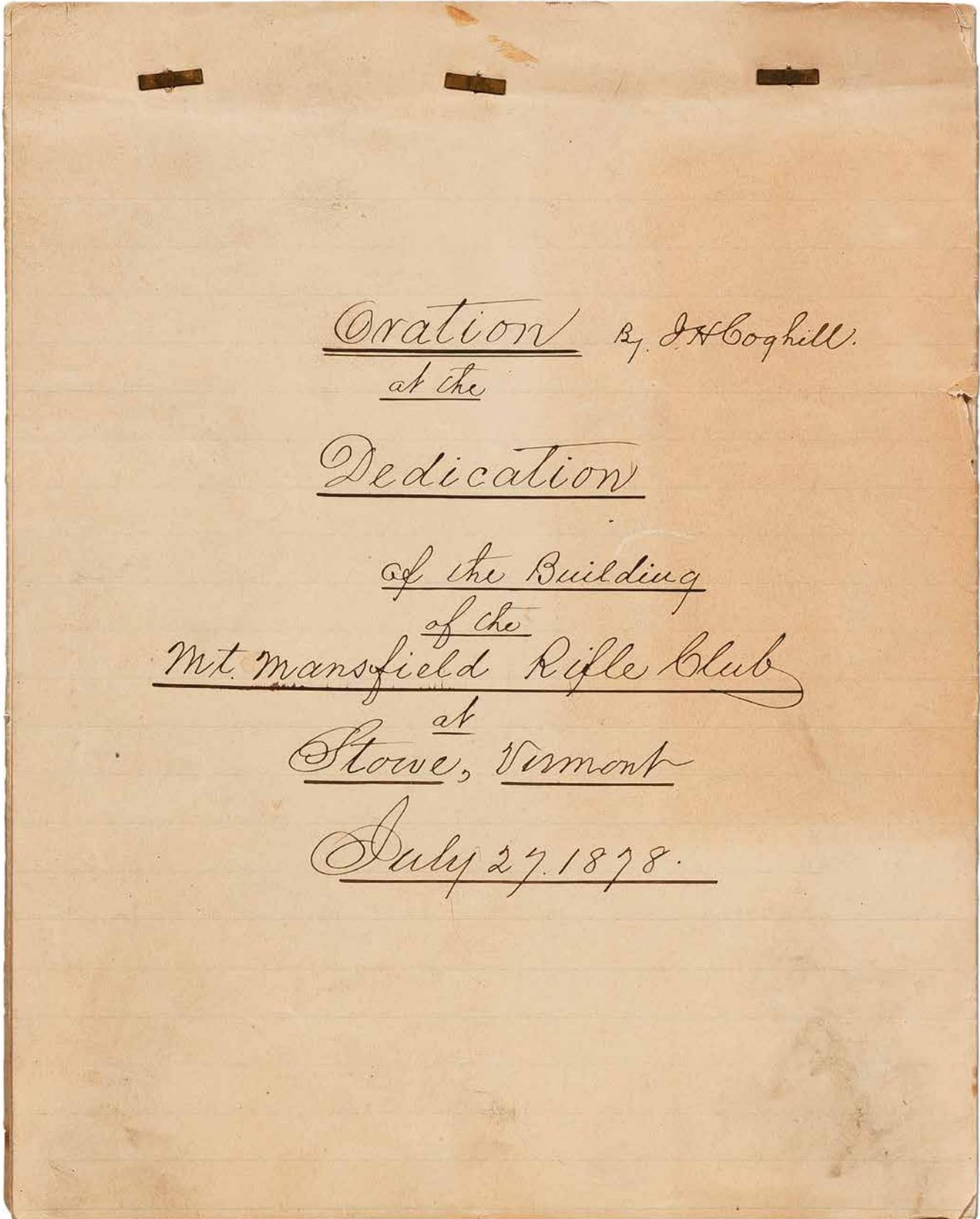




**James Henry Coghill**

*(Manuscript): Oration at the Dedication of the Building of the  
Mt. Mansfield Rifle Club at Stowe, Vermont July 27, 1878*

\$900



Oration By J. H. Coghill.  
at the

Dedication

of the Building  
of the  
Mt. Mansfield Rifle Club

at  
Stowe, Vermont

July 27, 1878.

Handwritten manuscript with multiple corrections. 26 leaves written on the rectos only, with one blank leaf with a clipping about the dedication affixed on the last leaf. Bradbound at the top. Small nicks and tears mostly confined to the title leaf, creases on the last blank leaf, a little soling on the outside leaves, else near fine. The handwritten introduction indicates that this was prepared by the author from memory two days after the event. The content of the address is facetious and satiric, making much merriment at the expense of the members of the Club, and lampooning their athletic endeavors, their accuracy as riflemen, their failures at sailing, polo, and other events. One particularly piquant passage addresses the possible invasion of the area by Canadians: "If our liberties should be threatened by the fierce and ruthless tramps, or any of the 'Macks' of Montreal should cross the borders and come with their clans and bagpipes, the glorious Oriflamme of the Mt. Mansfield Rifle Club would always be seen in the front ranks of every retreat - the shimmer of their rifles would flash on the highest eminence of every mountain where they would watch the movements of the invading foe... ." He continues on, ranking the skills of the three socially prominent members who would later in the ceremony participate in a shooting exhibition.

Coghill, then living in New York, had an interesting life. As an important merchant born in Virginia of a distinguished family. He worked in a local store in Loyds, Virginia and then lived at the home of his uncle Richard Garrett, at New Town, where some years later, John Wilkes Booth fled to after his assassination of Lincoln, and where he was found and killed by Federal troops. (Coghill's 1897 book *The Family of Coghill. 1377 to 1879* presents an interesting interview that he conducted with his uncle about the event). In 1848 he sailed for California, and after modest results set up in business in San Francisco as J.H. Coghill & Co., eventually considered one of the two largest commercial concerns in San Francisco. In 1857 he left the firm in the care of his brothers and went east to open a New York branch of the company.

His family had some connections with the nearby Henry family in Virginia, and at least for purposes of this oration, he claimed lineage, perhaps facetiously, from that other famous orator, Patrick Henry. A wonderfully funny send-up of a Vermont hunting club, delivered by an interesting character.

[BTC#416327]

Circumstances for which I am in no way responsible, has made it necessary for me to depart from my unalterable custom, and to give on this occasion, a written, instead of an extemporaneous address. Just before entering this building, as I sat gazing upon the blue heavens, and meditating upon the eccentricities of chimney swallows, and rifle balls in the course of their flight, I was informed that the Editor of the "Green Mountain Lyre, and Bass viol Calumniator," was to be present at our meeting. My quick <sup>Comprehension</sup> ~~perception~~ of the <sup>unknowable</sup> ~~unavoidable~~ led me at once to see the object of his presence, and knowing his propensity for perverting the truth, and misrepresenting all that is <sup>right + grand +</sup> "good," and his bitter hostility to me for having, <sup>on one occasion</sup> refused to <sup>send him</sup> ~~aid~~ <sup>25 cents</sup> in the <sup>purpose</sup> establishment of his paper, I felt assured that his sole object in being here, was to misrepresent my address in the Columns of the "Lyre". I therefore deemed it due to your Honorable Club, as well as to my own the name proposed for a paper to be published by the guests of the Hotel

So much Covets, to use in his favourite game of  
Pol(e)io, that he is fitting out the "Janet" for the  
special purpose of finding it, and inviting it  
on to Newport, when he hopes it will arrive some  
time before "May."\* The occasion as I have before  
intimated, is a grand one, and affords a theme  
worthy of the burning eloquence of Mr Demosthe-  
nes of Athens, and M. T. Cicero <sup>Esq</sup> of <sup>the same city</sup> ditto; or the  
other Demosthenes, "so called", our own "forest born",  
Pat Henry. Do not think Ladies & gentlemen that  
because I bear this name, along with several others,  
that I refer to myself. The gentleman to whom I  
refer is Patrick Henry, I am James Henry. we were  
both born in Virginia, and it has been intimated  
that his mantle descended to <sup>one of</sup> our family, & that  
inheriting his name it was laid upon <sup>when a baby</sup> my cradle. Be this as  
it may, there are certain resemblances in our histories  
his name was Henry, and so is mine - he was "forest born"  
and so was I, he belonged to the F. F. V's and so do I.  
He was an Orator, and it is for you ladies & gentlemen  
to decide whether the parallel holds good here.

\* Arrangements had been made for a duel between  
Mr. Bennett and Mr. May, but only one of the party was on the ground

by it, but having become a second nature, they cannot help it. Thus our good friends from the coal regions of Pennsylvania, who is more interested in the dark things under the earth, than the brighter ones above it, would top his head and say contemptuously, "no man making any pretensions to taste, would have selected for such an edifice ground that had so recently been 'Haydon'" Then our quiet and agreeable friend, <sup>alrightly</sup> who came up from New York, expecting to find <sup>the</sup> "Fuller" ~~the~~ house, and to enjoy the forest shades, would most probably say that the greatest attraction to a country place is its <sup>green woods and its</sup> warm groves, and that it showed a want of judgment to select a place of daily resort in an open field, but if the surroundings afforded none other - then good taste at least would have suggested a "ban field"

<sup>with overlaid with Fullers' earth</sup>  
 And there is our young friend, who wears the Colours of Columbia, and hates Euclid, already I see express disapprobation in his countenance. I know him pretty well, and have learned