

# WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Vol. XLII, No.1      Fall 2011



*Ralph Abrams Jones, great-grandson of the builder of the Golden Ball Tavern, was only seventeen and a half when he enlisted in the 35th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. He died less than one month later in the Battle of Antietam—Weston's first casualty of the Civil War. (Courtesy Golden Ball Tavern Museum)*

## The Civil War in Weston Part I

## Civil War Timeline

**Fall 1860:** Home Guard formed in Weston.

**December 20, 1860:** South Carolina becomes first state to secede from the Union.

**January, 1861:** John A. Andrew sworn in as Governor of Massachusetts and places Commonwealth militia in readiness.

**March 4, 1861:** Lincoln inaugurated as President.

**April 12, 1861:** Civil War begins with firing on Fort Sumter.

**April 15, 1861:** Lincoln calls for 75,000 troops from state militias for three-month terms to defend the capital.

**June 1861- June, 1862:** Sixteen men from Weston enlist.

**July 1862:** Lincoln calls for 300,000 “volunteers” for three-year enlistments. Weston quota is 17. Five additional men credited.

**August 1862:** Lincoln calls for 300,000 “nine-months men.” Weston quota is 27.

**March 1863:** Lincoln institutes first U.S. wartime draft requiring enrollment of every male citizen.

**July 1863:** 33 Weston men are drafted. 28 are exempted, one paid a commutation fee, two furnished substitutes, and two entered service.

**October 1863:** Lincoln calls for 300,000 more men. Weston forms Recruiting Committee and Citizens Recruiting Fund. Weston quota is 16.

**February and March 1864:** Lincoln calls for total of 400,000 - 500,000 men. Weston quota is 12 because of a surplus credit.

**April 1865:** Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrenders.

**August 22, 1865:** Reception for Returned Soldiers and Memorial Service in Honor of the Fallen held in Weston.

# Commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

2011 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Civil War, a conflict fought hundreds of miles away from Weston that nevertheless dominated the life of the town from 1860 to 1865.

The Civil War was the bloodiest in American history. An estimated 620,000 soldiers died, a rate six times that of World War II. According to historians, one out of every 16 white males in the North between ages 16 and 43 lost his life during the war. In the South, the number was closer to one in five. For every one killed in battle, two died of disease. A similar rate of death, about two percent, in the United States today would mean six million fatalities. (1)

The Civil War was America's first experience raising huge armies to fight an extended war. In Weston town reports, the story of the war is mainly a story of recruitment to fill quota after government quota with "volunteers" inspired by patriotism or attracted by ever increasing bounties. Letters from soldiers in the collection of the Weston Historical Society illuminate the lives of individual soldiers who left the comfort of home and family to fight in bloody battles throughout the South.

Sixty-seven Weston men fought in the war, and 12 gave their lives for the "holy cause of freedom." An additional 59 men were credited to the town's quotas, for a total of 126 men representing the Town of Weston in the Union army. (2)

Part II of this article will appear in the Spring 2012 issue of the *Weston Historical Society Bulletin* and will include biographical information about the men from Weston who lost their lives, transcriptions of letters in the society's collection from soldiers, and newly discovered information about the National Soldiers Home at the John Quincy Adams Farm, which operated from 1863 to 1871 on land that is now the site of Weston High School and Middle School.

## 1860: "The clouds were thickening over us"

When Abraham Lincoln, a known opponent of slavery, was elected President in November 1860, Southern states perceived a threat to their way of life. The atmosphere of crisis was felt throughout the country, including in the small agricultural town of Weston, population 1,243.

In the *History of the Town of Weston, Massachusetts, 1630-1890* by Col. Daniel S. Lamson—a book that was edited and published after the author's death—Lamson is credited with organizing a Home Guard:

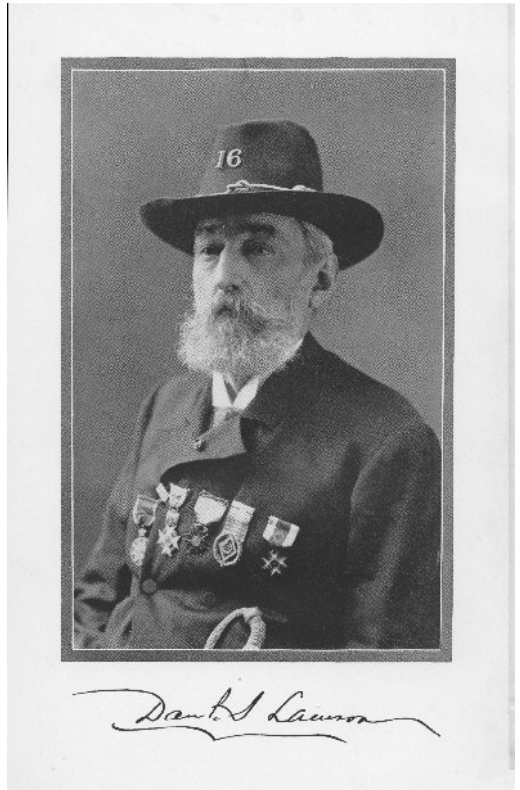
In the fall of the year 1860, when the clouds were thickening over us, but before any overt act had been committed by the slave States, a Home

Guard was organized by Captain D.S. Lamson for the purpose of drill and general preparation for future contingencies. The men purchased their own arms, which were deposited in town hall. About fifty young men joined the company, and were drilled in the manual of arms and street marching. (3)

Francis Henry Hastings, a history-minded Weston native and owner of the Hook & Hastings organ factory on the north side, wrote a brief account of Weston in wartime, now in the collection of the Weston Historical Society. His account of the Home Guard differs from Lamson's. Hastings writes that a Home Guard was formed on the north side of town by Samuel Patch (afterwards Captain), with Alonzo Fiske and others drilling, and a second squad formed in the center of town. This second squad may have been Lamson's, although Hastings does not credit him. (4) Hastings states that the two were later combined under drillmaster Sidney Willard, with perhaps 75 or 100 men in all; and that the squad existed until around August 1862, when many of the men enlisted and went to the front. (5)

Sidney Willard (1831-1862), a native of Lancaster, Massachusetts, was practicing law in Boston when the war began. According to a memorial tribute after his death, Willard drilled as many as 800 men from Boston, Cambridge, Weston, Waltham, Wrentham, and Wayland before organizing a company of men "in two days, instead of the eight allowed, so great was the confidence in him." (6) In an 1865 address at Weston's reception for returned soldiers, Rev. Edmund Hamilton Sears, minister of First Parish Church, spoke of Willard's influence on the Weston soldiers under his command:

The letters of the boys show with what fond admiration they clung to him. He had organized and drilled them here at home, inspired them with



*Daniel S. Lamson was appointed major of the Sixteenth Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers in 1861. He wears the number 16 on his hat. Lamson was always referred to as "Colonel" although he resigned from the military in 1862 because of ill health. He was the author of Weston's first history.*

confidence in his humane and heroic qualities, and breathed into them his own lofty and self-sacrificing patriotism. (7)

In 1860, the Town of Weston provided a list to the state of residents subject to military duty, a roster of 161 men. That year, town debt was \$3,700, a figure that would grow to \$14,735 in just two years.

## Fighting Begins

South Carolina was the first state to secede, on December 20, 1860. By the time of Lincoln's inauguration on March 4, 1861, six more had left the Union; and the Confederate States of America had been formally established, with Jefferson Davis as President. By the summer of 1861, the Confederacy included 11 states with a population of some 9 million, including 4 million slaves. Twenty states remained in the Union, with a population of 20 million and vastly greater industrial capabilities.

On April 12, 1861, the Civil War began when Confederate General P.T. Beauregard opened fire on the Union-held Fort Sumter in South Carolina. Three days later, President Lincoln issued a Proclamation calling for 75,000 militiamen to serve for a term of three months, to defend the capital at Washington, D.C.

The federal government did not have the resources to outfit an army, so the task fell to the states. Because of the early preparedness efforts of Massachusetts Governor John Albion Andrew, a strong Unionist who took office on the eve of the war, Massachusetts supplied the first volunteer regiments to reach the capital. Francis Henry Hastings's brief wartime account describes the mood in the Town of Weston in 1861:

. . . few people now remember the exciting conditions existing just prior to and at the outbreaking, the rushing of armed troops to the South, the home drills, the enlistments, the return from time to time of wounded men and all the incidents belonging to war times. (8)

In a later "Report of the Recruiting Committee," Weston officials observed: "In the early part of the struggle volunteers freely offered themselves as fast as the Government was prepared to receive them. . ." (9) The men in the Home Guard enlisted in various regiments formed by the state. (At the time of the Civil War, an Army infantry regiment was composed of 10 companies and had a maximum strength of 101 officers and men.)

In June 1861, Daniel Lamson was appointed major of the 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment then forming at Camp Cameron in North Cambridge for three years deployment. Lamson rose in rank but resigned from the military in 1862 due to ill health. Until his death in 1912, he was always referred to as "Colonel Lamson."

The following 16 men were among the earliest enlistees credited to Weston: (10)

- Daniel S. Lamson, 33, farmer, 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment
- \*William Henry Carter, 21, farmer, 26<sup>th</sup> Regiment (originally the 6<sup>th</sup> Regiment)
- Ebenezer Tucker, 23, wheelwright, 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment cavalry under Col. Williams
- John E. Powers, 21, farmer, 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment
- Charles L. Field, 37, clerk, 99<sup>th</sup> NY Regiment
- Lewis Jones, 28, farmer, 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment cavalry
- Philip J. Meyer, Jr., 19, farmer, Capt Nim's 2<sup>nd</sup> Battery
- \*John Robinson, 18, laborer, 24<sup>th</sup> Regiment
- Warren Stickney, 20, laborer, 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment
- Adoniram J. Smith, laborer, 22<sup>nd</sup> Regiment
- Thomas Palmer, laborer, 16<sup>th</sup> regiment, transferred to 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine
- \*Edward Banyen (sometimes written Banyea), 26, laborer, 5<sup>th</sup> Vermont Regiment, killed at Richmond
- William G. Clark, 23, wheelwright, 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment
- Frank W. Bigelow, lawyer, 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment
- Henry H. Richardson, 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment, servant to Major Lamson
- Thomas Fahey, 9<sup>th</sup> Regiment
- \*died in the war

In November 1861, the town held a benefit for Soldiers of the National Army. Organizers charged 20 cents a ticket for a "Program of Tableaux and Burlesques" held at Town Hall and including bohemian gipsey (sic) scenes, a burlesque concert, and tableaux of the tomb scene from Romeo and Juliet and "The Goddess of Liberty."

Both Northerners and Southerners thought the war would end quickly. According to historian Drew Gilpin Faust in her 2008 book *This Republic of Suffering*:

The North entered the First Battle of Bull Run in the summer of 1861 anticipating a decisive victory that would quash the rebellion; Confederates thought the Union would quickly give up after initial reverses. Neither side could have imagined the magnitude and length of the conflict that unfolded, nor the death tolls that proved its terrible cost. (11)

The world had never seen a war on this scale.

## Call for "Volunteers"

In the summer of 1861, untrained Union troops were forced to retreat to Washington after the First Battle of Bull Run. In April 1862, 13,000 Union troops were killed or wounded along with 10,000 Confederates in a surprise attack on Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's unprepared troops at Shiloh. Rev. E.H. Sears described the bleak situation in his address at the 1865 reception for returning soldiers:

It was the darkest part of the war; it was when the hearts of men were failing them; when the Northern sentiment was becoming demoralized and thick with treason, and the life of the nation seemed to many to be trembling in the balance. (12)

Sears added that McClellan had failed, Pope was retreating, and "the foe . . . was on his way to the Free States. . ."

As casualties mounted and word came back about the horrors of combat and high death rates from disease, the need for additional troops could not be met without

a change in recruitment policies. In July 1862, the President issued a call for 300,000 men for enlistments of three years. States were given quotas, which in turn were broken down by cities and towns. Massachusetts Governor Andrew issued an executive order on July 2 calling for 10 to 15 new volunteer regiments and reinforcements for existing units.

Governor Andrew's order offered incentives in an effort to make the difficult task of recruiting a little easier. Each new recruit received a month's pay (\$13) plus a bounty of \$25 in advance, meaning that the recruit had \$38 before he left the Commonwealth, to enable him to provide temporarily for his family. At the end of his term of enlistment, on honorable discharge, he would receive a further bounty of \$75, which in the case of death went to

*A program of tableaux (costumed actors carefully posed) and burlesques was held on November 18, 1861, to benefit the Soldiers of the National Army.*

**POSTPONED**  
UNTIL MONDAY EVENING.

---

PROGRAMME OF  
**TABLEAUX**  
...AND...  
**BURLESQUES!**  
—TO BE GIVEN AT THE—  
**TOWN HALL, . . . WESTON, MASS.,**  
...ON...  
**MONDAY EVENING, November 18, 1861,**  
—FOR THE—  
**BENEFIT OF THE**  
**SOLDIERS OF THE NATIONAL ARMY**  
COMMENCING WITH A  
**BOHEMIAN CIPSEY SCENE,**  
—ENTITLED—  
**FLOWERS OF THE FOREST.**  
After which the following Tableaux:—  
**THE GODDESS OF LIBERTY!**  
Illustrations from the Poets!  
**THE CROSS AND THE CROWN;**  
**THE TOMB SCENE IN ROMEO AND JULIET.**  
TO BE FOLLOWED BY  
**A BURLESQUE CONCERT, by a well-known Troupe.**  
After which the TABLEAUX—  
**NIGHT & MORNING;**  
**BERENGARIA at the TENT of RICHARD.**  
To be followed by the Comic Song—in character—  
**SIMON, THE CELLARER!**  
—AND CONCLUDING WITH—  
**POOR PILLICODDY**

---

**TICKETS 20 CENTS EACH, to be had at the door.**  
Doors open at 7. . . . . Entertainement to commence at 7 1-2 o'clock precisely.

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J. H. & F. F. Farroll, Printers, 112 Washington Street, Boston.

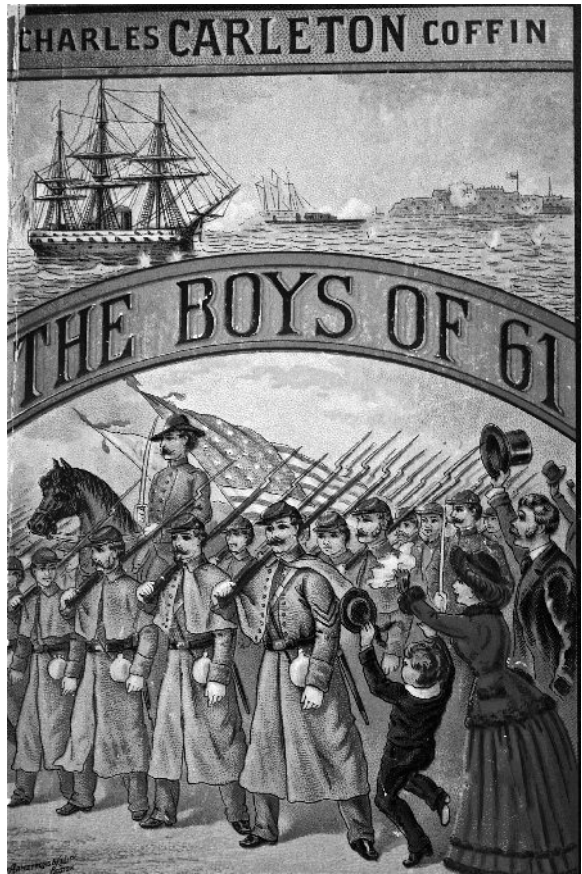
his family. Under the Soldiers' Families Relief Law, further provisions were made for the needy families of recruits by offering them aid according to the necessity of each case, up to the amount of \$12 a month. Governor Andrew's executive order concludes with these inspiring words:

Massachusetts, which has never slumbered nor slept, must now arise to still higher efforts, and pledge to all the duties of patriotism with renewed devotion, the individual efforts, the united hearts, heads and hands of all her people. (13)

But the call to arms in Massachusetts and other Union states was greeted with nothing like the enthusiasm of 1861. Governors urged Lincoln to call up troops for shorter terms, in keeping with Washington's "victory is imminent" tone. On August 4, 1862, Lincoln called up 300,000 men for nine months service, in addition to the 300,000 already requested in July for three years. The August order had a more coercive tone:

... if any state shall not by the 15<sup>th</sup> of August furnish its quota of the additional 300,000 volunteers authorized by law, the deficiency of volunteers in that State will also be made up by special draft from the militia. The Secretary of War will establish regulations for this purpose. (14)

States were assigned a quota according to populations. This time, the government said it would draft men into service from any state that did not meet its quota. The War Department order gave the states just two weeks to meet their quotas, a deadline eventually extended to August 22.



*The cover of Charles Carleton Coffin's classic The Boys of 61 in the collection of the Weston Historical Society shows crowds cheering well-equipped Union soldiers as they march south at the onset of the Civil War.*



# Quotas, Bounties, and the Threat of a Draft

Weston's quota for the July 1862 call for three-year men was 17, and for the August 1862 call for nine-months men, 27. Officials tackled the question of how to fill the quota for the "volunteer army" and how much to pay in bounties to encourage enlistments. Bounties offered by the town were in addition to whatever was offered by the state or federal government.

Bounties were used on both sides in an attempt to avoid resorting to a draft. The idea of a draft was widely resisted, whereas paying non-residents to fill a town's quota was the accepted norm. Because of the bounty system, young men from poor communities were more likely to serve in the military. Toward the end of the war, bounties paid to enlistees reportedly went as high as \$677 in New York. (15)

Some Weston soldiers refused to accept the bounty offered by the town, feeling that military service was their patriotic duty. Ebenezer Tucker Jr., in an 1863 letter from the field probably written to selectman Alonzo Fiske, expresses the negative feelings of many soldiers toward the "bounty soldier:"

In relation to the bounties, I have no doubt they have a great influence with many as regards their inlisting (sic), but as I inlisted (sic) purely from patriotic motives, it would have no influence whatever with me, as we old soldiers entertain but a poor opinion of a bounty soldier. . . (16)

Many enlistees accepted bounties as appropriate payment for service and as a way to help their families. There is no record in Weston of soldiers abusing the system, although there are references to the need for recruiters to carefully document non-resident enlistees and physically escort them to military authorities. Outside of Weston, the bounty system became widely abused. Bounty jumping became a profession, as men signed up, deserted, and enlisted again elsewhere.

## Meeting Weston's Quota

A picture emerges from Weston's war records of a unified citizenry under excellent leadership, responding to the demand for recruits in pragmatic and thoughtful ways, with consideration for the men involved and their families. Involving the whole community was part of their approach. After President Lincoln's first call, Weston selectmen put out a notice to all citizens to meet at Town Hall on Saturday at 6 o'clock ". . . for the purpose of devising & consulting upon the manner of raising the quota of men called for by the requisition of Government," adding "A full attendance of all the inhabitants of the Town is desirable." (17)

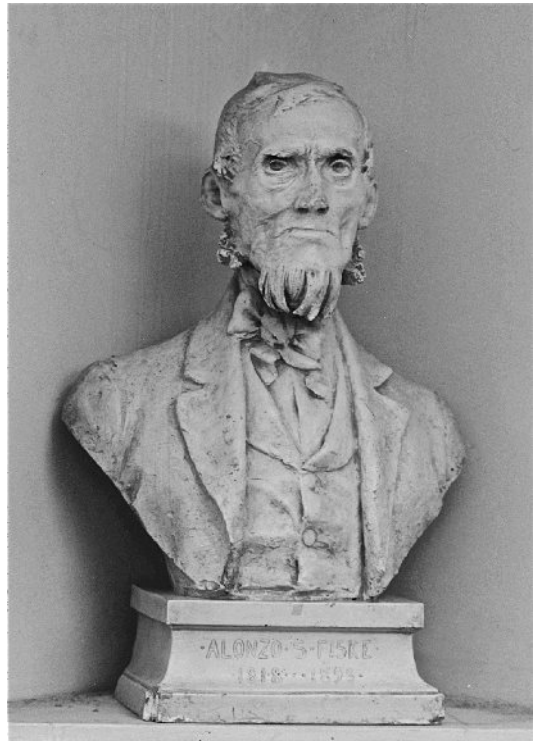
The military roll of August 18, 1862, prepared by the Assessors, lists 174 Weston men between ages 18 to 44. Of these, 28 were already in service and one had been discharged for illness. Most of the men were described as either farmers or laborers but some were skilled tradesmen or professional men.

A later “Report of the Recruiting Committee” records the way the town handled the first two quotas:

. . . to fill our quota, the town voted to pay a bounty of \$200 to each volunteer. This action, though not strictly legal, was sanctioned by common consent, and afterwards confirmed by the Legislature. In August following, 300,000 nine months’ men were called for, and the town voted to pay the same to fill this call. It cost the town to furnish her proportion of the men for these calls about \$8,800. (18)

The phrase “not strictly legal” in the above passage is notable. Weston and other Massachusetts cities and towns began offering their own bounties before the state legislature passed laws allowing municipalities to offer bounties. Weston officials seemed to take a pro-active, market-oriented view of the recruiting process and were willing to pay what it took to attract recruits to fill each quota.

There is some discrepancy in the various reports as to how much the town paid in bounties at each of the calls. In his *History of the Town of Weston*, Lamson is apparently incorrect in saying that the 17 men who signed up at the first call got \$100. The “Report of the Selectmen” in the *Town Report for the Year Ending March 31, 1863* lists \$3400 paid to the initial 17 recruits, or \$200 per soldier.



*This bust of Alonzo S. Fiske is owned by the Town of Weston. Fiske, who served as selectman from 1859 to 1871, took on the tasks of preparing lists of men eligible for military service, recruiting men to meet the town's quota, organizing fundraising to offer “citizens’ bounties,” and handing correspondence relating to payments of bounties and State aid. (Photo by Pamela W. Fox)*

In later years, when the legislature limited what municipalities were allowed to pay, Weston found a way around the limit by collecting private contributions and offering “citizen’s bounties.”

## **The Recruiters: Rev. Calvin Topliff, Dr. Otis Hunt, and Alonzo Fiske**

Three men took the major responsibility for recruiting: selectman Alonzo S. Fiske, Baptist clergyman Rev. Calvin H. Topliff, and town physician Otis E. Hunt. Alonzo Sewall Fiske (1818-1893) was a selectman from 1858 to 1871 as well as assessor and tax collector, justice of the peace, and state representative in 1878. A descendent of one of Weston’s first settlers, his farm on North Avenue, said to be a mile square, was one of the largest in Weston. The family genealogy boasts that for many years Alonzo was “in charge of most of the town business of Weston” and town records corroborate this view. He took the lead in all war-related matters. Soldiers wrote to “Friend Fiske” with news and expressions of respect and affection. Others asked for help in obtaining promised bounties or solving problems with state aid.

The Rev. Calvin Howe Topliff (1818–1907) was minister of First Baptist Church from 1853 to 1867. Topliff’s 14-year tenure was among the longest in the church history. He became a prominent citizen of the town, serving as a long-time member of the school committee, as one of three men appointed in 1856 to start a public library, and as a long-time library trustee. Topliff graduated from Brown University Class of 1846 and served for several years in other churches before beginning his pastorate in Weston. According to church history, “The pastor brought to his work a well-furnished and disciplined mind [and] a sympathizing heart. . .” and was known as a prominent supporter of the Civil War:

Then again, our Brother entered upon the work of saving the Union in the time of our civil war by securing volunteers for the Union army. Weston owes a debt of gratitude to the pastor of this church for creating a healthy influence and in inducing men to enlist to preserve the country from the impending overthrow. Nobly did he abide by his convictions, and by precept and example, stood by the old flag, even when it trailed in the dust . . . His name to-day, with the “Boys in Blue,” is the watchword for renewed fidelity and loyalty to the land of the free and the home of the brave. (19)

As explained later in this article, it was Rev. Topliff who took on the task of retrieving the bodies of Weston’s fallen, making several trips to the South to attend to the dead and wounded.

Dr. Otis Eugene Hunt (1822–c.1904) settled in Weston in 1848 and remained until 1864. About 1851 he built the Italianate house at 338 Boston Post Road later purchased by Rev. Dr. Edmund Hamilton Sears. In the late 1850s, both Dr. Hunt

and Rev. Topliff served on the three-man committee appointed to secure donations and establish a public library. A few years later, both Hunt and Topliff were closely involved with recruiting for the war.

An official “Volunteer Enlistment” form dated November 25, 1863 at the Weston Historical Society shows how the three men worked together. The recruit was Charles W. Thomas, age 18, listed as a laborer born in Lowell. Otis Hunt signed the form as the examining surgeon and Alonzo S. Fiske as the recruiting officer. Hunt certified that Thomas was “free from all bodily defects and mental infirmity, which would, in any way, disqualify him from performing the duties of a soldier,” and Fiske certified that Thomas, had been “minutely inspected” and that “he was entirely sober when enlisted,” believed to be of age, and qualified to perform the duties of an able-bodied soldier. On the back of the form, Calvin H. Topliff is listed as the guardian of Thomas and signed the section marked “Consent in Case of Minor.” It is not clear why this was necessary, since Thomas was over 18, but perhaps it was a way to assure the town that, if Thomas proved to be a minor, he could still serve.

A letter of August 1, 1862 from Otis Hunt to Alonzo Fiske suggests something about Hunt’s medical ethics and compassion:

Dear Sir,

Mr George Cheney informs me that he has enlisted, and wishes to know if his [sic] capable of doing military duty. He has been under my observation and treatment more or less of the time for the past Two years, and I have this day made a Thorough examination of him. He has no physical disability obvious to any one who has no previous acquaintance with him. He has been under Treatment, chiefly, for disease of the head and nervous system, attended with spasms and paralysis.

He is now well but weak, and I think liable to a return of the same complaint and symptom when under much excitement, or great fatigue, or exposed for much length of time to an intense sun. Unless he can have some special service, like guard duty at fort or attending on the sick in hospitals, I think he will be a burden to the government rather than a help. I advise you not to accept him, unless it be for specified light duties. (20)

Cheney was accepted and became one of the 17 to meet the “first call.” Of his war experience, we know only that he survived.

The three men appear to have worked together to find non-Weston recruits to meet quotas. In a letter from Feb 3 (year omitted), Hunt writes to Alonzo Fiske that Rev. Topliff needs a second man to go with him to a place (location unclear) where potential recruits could be found. One man was needed to talk to the available men and another to take a potential recruit to be examined and signed up, as the man would not “count” for the town until officially enlisted.



*William C. Stimpson, Jr. had a wife and children when he signed up as one of the 17 men who signed up as three-year men in July 1862. Stimpson was killed in the battle near Poplar Spring Church, Virginia, at age 29, on September 20, 1864. (Weston Historical Society collection)*

Dear Sir,  
Mr. Topliff wishes you to go to Boston tomorrow, to assist him. Today he lost one or two men by being obliged to go with a man whom he bought, to the receiving station, and attending to the examination. He wishes you to attend to this latter, while he lingers about the Brakers (?), for choice of men. Mr. Topliff will be in town tomorrow, and will expect to see you there. Please help him. (21)

Note the reference to “a man whom he bought.”

## The First Quota of Seventeen

Of the 17 men who enlisted for three years to fill the July 1862 quota, five were married and 12 were single. The majority occupation was laborer. The youngest soldier was 17 and the oldest, 36. It is notable that even in this first quota, at least three were not Weston residents. (22)

Joseph Smith, 24, laborer, married

Lemuel Smith, 25, laborer, single

George G. Cheney, 23, laborer, single

Charles Roberts, 18, laborer, single

\*Wm. C. Stimpson Jr, 28, farmer, (listed on reverse side as machinist), married

\*Frederick A. Hews, 22, potter, single

Charles G. Fisher, 18, laborer, single

\*William Henzy, 18, (residence not listed) laborer, single

Andrew C. Badger, 25. (Natick), shoemaker, single

Daniel H. Adams, 17 (West Newton), laborer, single

Andrew Floyd, 31, laborer, married

Samuel Patch Jr. 25, carpenter, married

Henry A. Tucker, 27, carpenter, single

\*R. A. Jones, 17 years, 6 months, farmer, single

John L. Ayer, 36, wheelwright, married

Jabez N. Smith, 18 (Lincoln). Farmer, single

\*George T. Tucker, 19, blacksmith, single

\*died in the war

All 17 were mustered into the 35<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment. According to Rev. Sears's address, ". . . the glorious Thirty-fifth went forth under Capt. Willard, and even declined going unless *he* might lead them." (23) Willard rose to the rank of Major and was commanding the 35th Regiment when he was killed at Fredericksburg in December 1862.

The following five men were also credited as serving from the Town of Weston, making a total of 38 three-year men including the 16 early enlistees and the 17 men from the first quota listed above:

- David E. Cook, 35<sup>th</sup> Regiment, sappers and miners
- John W. Drew, 35<sup>th</sup> Regiment infantry
- \*James M. Fairfield, 38<sup>th</sup> Regiment infantry
- Daniel Keyes, 41<sup>st</sup> Regiment infantry
- Sefroy Britten, 3<sup>rd</sup> Rhode Island battery



*Twenty-one of the Weston men who enlisted as "nine-months men" in August, 1862 were in the 44th Regiment Infantry. They were among those photographed at Camp Meigs in Readville, Massachusetts in 1863. (Photo courtesy Town of Weston, original at Town Hall )*

# The Nine-Months Men

Under the President's call for nine-months men in August 1862, the Weston quota was 27 men. Their names, along with two extra, are listed in Lamson's *History of the Town of Weston*. (24) Twenty-one became part of the 44<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, six joined the 43<sup>rd</sup>, and the remaining two were in other regiments. Two died in combat: Edmund L. Cutter and Fuller Morton. On August 30, 1862, Alonzo Fiske wrote to the Adjunct General that he hoped that "all necessity for a Draft from our Town will be obviated as we have men pledged, if men are required." (25)

## Using Men from Other Towns to Fill Quotas

Cities and towns could fill their quotas with any man suitable for military duty; and Weston, like other municipalities, turned to non-residents to meet its numbers. As the official in charge of recruiting, Alonzo Fiske handled the needs not only of Weston soldiers but also of any soldier credited to Weston's quota, including inquiries from relatives, petitions for state aid, and requests for help in collecting promised bounties.

For example, the following is a letter from Charles B. Stevens to Alonzo Fiske, dated November 4, 1862, written on behalf of the anxious sister of Benjamin A. Drake of Worcester. Drake had enlisted as one of Weston's nine-months men, evidently without the knowledge of his family:

Dear Sirs,

Will you oblige me by informing me whether a young man by the name of Benjamin A Drake enlisted in your town with the nine month men and if so please inform me in what Regiment and Company he is and whether he is now in Camp or gone to the seat of war and if in camp [,] where the camp is situated. The young man is a Brother to my wife and we accidentally heard today that he had gone to the war and my wife is very anxious to see him if in camp and if gone[,] to know where he is. (26)

In a letter from Natick dated September 6 (year unknown), written to the Weston selectmen, N.E. Drew writes on behalf of his son John, expressing his concern that John had not received his bounty from Weston and had lost his chance to enlist to meet the quota of another town:

Mr. Fisk sir

Permit me to wright you a few lines in regards to my son, John W. Drew. I gave him my concent (sic) to inlist (sic) in west town (sic) quoto (sic), with the concideration (sic) of too (sic) hundred dollars, but he has not received the bounty money from you. I think it is due him upon fare (sic) deal and upon honor. He has ben (sic) in camp expecting to recived (sic) his bounty until the present time. If you had told him that our quoto (sic)

was full he would had (sic) a chance to enlisted (sic) some other town but now he has no chance to enlist to get his bounty money and has ben (sic) sworn in which binds him and upon the princible (sic) of fare (sic) dealing and honor you should pay him his bounty and it is opinion of others (sic). (27)

These letters continued arriving after the war ended. A letter from Martin Carnes of Swampscott to Alonzo Fiske, dated May 24, 1865, inquires about William Carnes. Unknown to his brother, William had died at Andersonville Prison in June of 1864:

I wish to inquire of you whether my brother William Carnes who enlisted in the Navy about the first of June 1863 is entitled to a bounty from the town of Weston as I understand he counts on their quota. if he is, and you can, I should like to have you send it to his mother in my care at Swampscott or I will go out there and get it. and if you can tell me how I can find out whether he is dead or alive and any other information we should be very much obliged to you as we have not heard from him since he was taken prisoner the seventh or eighth of January 1864. . . (28)

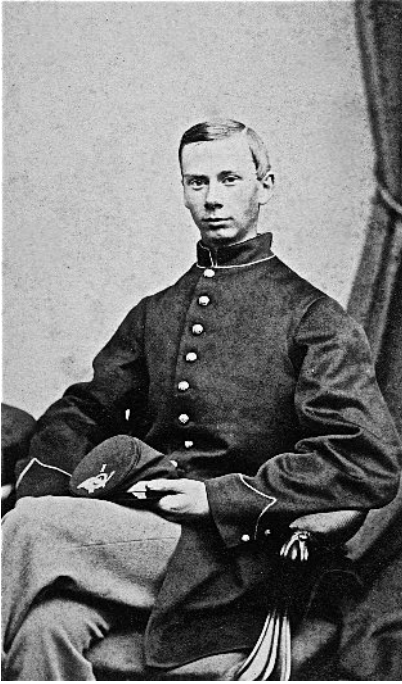
A letter to Alonzo Fiske from Michael Dunfee of Randolph, dated October 24, 1866, asks Fiske help him in the collection of the \$200 promised bounty. Dunfee was one of 16 men used to fill a quota of 1863:

Will you be so kind as to inform me if you have kept the Records of all the men that you Enlisted in your town if so Will you Please look over the List and see if my name is ) Michael Dunfee Co H 2<sup>nd</sup> Mass Art [artillery]. (I was Enlisted by Mr. Nathan Todd ( of Boston. For to fill the Quota of Weston. Mr. Fiske now if you will be so kind as to send me a certificate as to the date of my Enlistment it will be doing me a great Favor as there is two Hundred Dollars Bounty Due to me yet that I have not Received.

Mr. Fiske it Would be so much Better if you would get the Justice of the Peace that swore me into the service to make out it Certificate stating the time that I Enlisted. Mr. Fiske as you are the only Person that I know out there in that town and as you told me if anything was wrong with me to write to you and that you would do all you Could for me I hope that you will do all you can for me. I served my time and done my Duty like a man as my Discharge will show and now they ought to Pay me what they Promised me.

Very Respty yours, Michael Dunfee, Randolph Mass (29)





*Carte de visite photographs were very popular during the Civil War. Edwin Porter Upham (left) and George C. Floyd (right) were two of Weston's nine-months men and served in the 44th Regiment Infantry. The Weston Historical Society collection also includes carte de visite images of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson along with Ulysses S. Grant and other Union generals.*

## State Aid

Beginning in 1861, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts made provisions for aid to families and dependent relatives of men in service who were part of a quota, and also for those disabled in service, their families, and for the families of those who died as the result of service whether by act of the enemy, accident, or diseases. Cities and towns were authorized to raise money and make monthly payments to the parties entitled to it, in proportion to the number in the family, subject to certain conditions and restrictions. Municipalities were to be reimbursed by the state for payments in conformity to the law.

The Weston Historical Society collection includes a number of letters regarding state aid, for example the following from a soldier in the field, G.H. Poole, to Alonzo Fiske on October 7, 1862:

Kind sir,

I write you to see if you could give me any information about the State aid I heard it was allowed. I have a Mother with two small children at home they reside in Boston. If I was allowed State aid it would be a great help to them. . . (30)

A second example is from a discharged soldier living in East Cambridge, written after the war, on November 19, 1866:

Mr. Fiske Dear Sir

I wish to know if you would pay me my State aid if I should come to Weston thear (sic) will be two months due me the first Saturday in December. I have no place of residence but whear (sic) I can mak (sic) a living I am working in East Cambridge but the work I am at is getting Slack. I am going to be Discharged I get only six \$ Dollars per week so I don't know what to do. . . (31)

## Ralph A. Jones: The First to Die

The Massachusetts 35<sup>th</sup> Regiment, which included the first quota of 17 from Weston, saw some of the heaviest action in the war. In his address at the reception for returned soldiers, Rev. E.H. Sears spoke about this regiment:

The Thirty-fifth was gathered largely from the homes of Middlesex, so rich in Revolutionary memories . . . Without drill, without any of that preparation which hardens the recruit into the veteran, the Thirty-fifth were plunged at once into the thickest of the fray. (32)

According to Sears, the regiment lost two-thirds of its officers and nearly one-third of its men, either killed or wounded, in less than a month after leaving New England.

The 35th left on August 22, 1862, marched immediately through Washington into Maryland, and by mid-September were at South Mountain, where they had their first battle. On September 17 they were at Antietam Creek near Sharpsburg, Maryland, where Confederate forces under General Lee were caught by General McClellan. The Battle of Antietam had no clear winner, but because General Lee withdrew to Virginia, McClellan was considered the victor. According to Civil War historians, the battle convinced the British and French—who were contemplating official recognition of the Confederacy—to reserve action. It also gave Lincoln the opportunity to announce his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, which would free all slaves in areas rebelling against the United States, effective January 1, 1863.

The Battle of Antietam was the bloodiest single day of the war, with an estimated 23,100 casualties: 2,108 Union soldiers killed and 9,549 wounded, and 2,700 Confederates killed and 9,029 wounded. One of the dead—the first Weston casualty in the war—was Ralph Abrams Jones, great-grandson of Isaac Jones, builder

of the Golden Ball Tavern. Ralph Jones was only 17 years and 6 months old when he signed the enlistment roll on July 21, 1862, “a young man . . . hardly old enough to go to war,” wrote one observer. (33) Rev. Sears told his story this way:

Ralph Jones was the first who fell; —a good boy of gentle manners, fresh from the teachings of the Sunday School; who had seen only seventeen summers, but who felt the urgency of an ardent patriotism. Ralph appeared before sunrise at the house of the recruiting agent. ‘Do give me a chance to enlist!’ said he, fearing that the number was already full. He fell at Antietam; storming the heights over the bridge; giving his young life in one of the most decisive battles. He is the honored proto-martyr of Weston in the war that saved the republic. (34)

When the 35th Regiment was mustered out of service in 1865, only 4 of the 17 Weston recruits were left. Five were dead, and the rest had been discharged because of wounds or sickness.

## Bringing Back the Bodies of the Dead

For family members and friends in the North, the prospect of loved ones dying far from home and buried in what most considered profane Southern soil led to anguish and outrage. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, death generally occurred in the home. People had a chance to view the body; and burial took place in a familiar place, which usually included previously departed family and neighbors.



During the war, many families did whatever they could to bring the body of a loved family member home, either by making the trip south on their own or paying someone to locate, retrieve, and ship the body north. In her book *This Republic of Suffering*, Drew Gilpin

*This headstone at Weston's Central Cemetery was erected by the family of Edmund L. Cutter, one of Weston's nine-months men, who died in the Battle of New Bern, North Carolina, in April 1863, and his brother Frederick, who enlisted from Newton and was killed at Gettysburg in July, 1863. Their bodies were brought back to be buried in Weston. (Photo by Pamela W. Fox)*

Faust writes about this practice:

Other civilians volunteered, traveling from afar by the hundreds, determined that their loved ones not suffer and die among strangers. Many families of moderate means flocked to battlefields in order to reclaim bodies, encase them in coffins, and escort them home. A focus of wonder and horror, battle sites in fact became crowded with civilians immediately after the cessation of hostilities, besides relatives in search of kin, there were scavengers seeking to rob the dead, entrepreneurial coffin makers and embalmers, and swarms of tourists. . .(35)

According to the *Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*, the Civil War carnage led to the birth of modern funeral practices:

As a result of their desires—to maintain familial control over the final resting place and, if possible, have one last look before the body vanished—a new form of treating the dead appeared on the social scene, and paved the way for an entirely modern funeral industry. Undertakers who contracted with Northern families began to experiment with ways to preserve bodies that had to be shipped long distances on train cars, often during the hot summer months. The revolutionary practice that emerged in this context, embalming, provided both the military and Northern communities with a scientific, sanitary, and sensible way to move bodies across the land. (36)

At a Weston Town Meeting on September 27, 1862, voters passed a resolution authorizing Rev. Topliff to go to Maryland to bring back the body of Ralph Jones and to attend to the wants of the wounded men suffering in any of the hospitals. The Town paid Topliff \$273.68 for recovering the body of Ralph Jones, bringing home the body of Frederick Hews, who had died in a hospital in Washington, D.C., and rendering aid to sick and wounded soldiers. According to F. H. Hastings's later report, Topliff brought home Joseph Smith, who had been wounded at Antietam: "He was "shot through the lungs, dragged himself down to the brook, drank water and lived and was brought home by him. He lived a good many years after that time." (37)

Later in the war, Rev. Topliff was paid \$86.90 for recovering, embalming, and transporting the body of Edmund L. Cutter, for assistance rendered Daniel Robinson, and for examination in prospect of recovering the body of James N. Fairchild, killed at Port Hudson, Louisiana.(38) The bodies of George T. Tucker, William H. Carter, and John Robinson, all killed in battle, were also recovered at an expense to the town of \$416.03. (39)

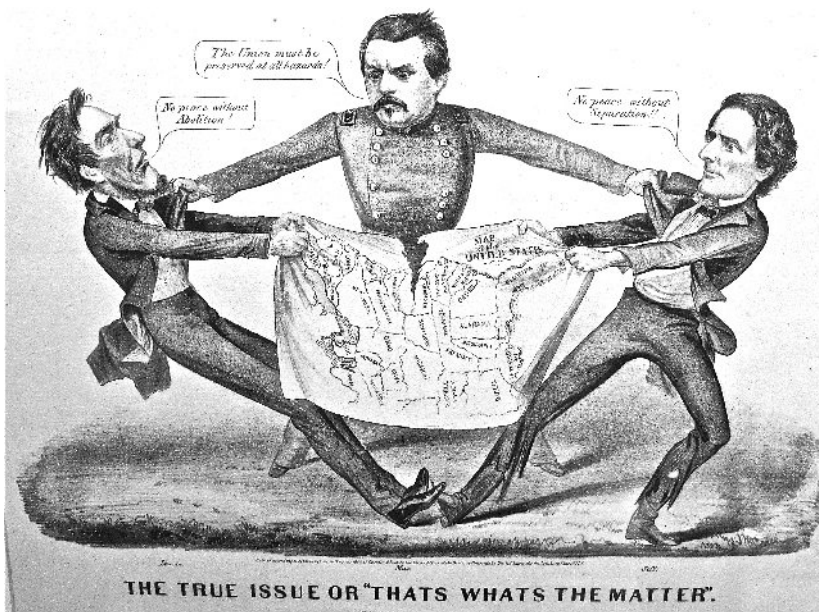
In other cases, families were unable to recover the bodies. The following is a letter dated October 13, 1864 from Albert Pope, captain of Company I of the 35<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts, to the father of Weston soldier William Stimpson Jr.:

Dear Sir,

Your letter of the eighth concerning the death of your son is at hand. In reply I would state, that we made an attack on the enemies works, which was unsuccessful. We had to fall back in consequence of the Rebs hurling a large force on each flank. Your son was by the side of Lieut. Loyd of our regiment when he was shot in the small of the back, the ball passing out of his bowels. He asked Lieut. Loyd to carry him off. Lieut. Loyd took him into his arms and carried him about fifty yards when the Corp. [Corporal] gasped and expired. The Rebels were close on to us, so that the Lt. had to leave him to save himself.

The body was probably buried where he died, which is about mid way between our picket line and the Rebels.

I do not know whether the body could be recognized now or not. It would be difficult to obtain it now. But our army will probably make another advance in that direction soon, and gain possession of the ground.



*The "true issue" for many in the North was the abolition of slavery. In his address at the reception for returning soldiers, Rev. Edmund Hamilton Sears described it this way: "It was no sectional conflict between North and South. It was a question whether the whole country should be ruled by the slave-despotism or by free government. . ."* (Image courtesy Boston Public Library)

In closing all I have to say is, that your son was a brave and noble soldier, and we mourn his loss as another one offered on the altar of his country. Your son knew his duty and always did it. His death has added another name to the heros (sic) of his country. (40)

The great-granddaughter of Wm. Stimpson Jr., Eloise Kenney, recounts that Stimpson's daughter later went down to Virginia to see where her father was buried but was never able to find the burial site. (41)

In 1867, Congress passed formal legislation to establish national cemeteries, and the government undertook a comprehensive program to relocate soldiers' remains. When the program was completed in 1871, 303,536 Union soldiers had been reburied in 74 national cemeteries, with 54% of the men reportedly identified. (42)

## **The Rhododendrons at Central Cemetery**

One of the traditions associated with the return of the body of Ralph Jones is the report that Rev. Topliff brought back with him two rhododendron bushes that were planted in Central Cemetery. It appears from the following letter in the Weston Historical Society collection that the rhododendrons were not planted at each side of the main gate but rather were planted well inside the cemetery along the central axis. This information is in from an undated letter from Franklin G. Cooper to a Dr. Peterson:

At the time of the Civil War, Mr. Topliff was our minister, and when a man from Weston was killed in battle, he went south and brought back the body. He went at least three times, and one time he brought up two Rhododendrons and set them in the old cemetery, just as you go in, go straight down the center ave. till you come to the banking, there are two steps with a Rhododendron on each side. These were set there in memory of those soldiers who died in the war. I'm the only one alive who knows anything about this, and thought you might talk it over with the townspeople, they may like to do something about it to keep alive the memory. (43)

A sign at Central Cemetery does keep alive the memory, although judging from the description above, the sign is probably not placed next to the actual bushes that Rev. Topliff brought back.

## **By 1863, The Cost to the Town**

In addition to the terrible human cost of the war, by 1863 Weston was coping with mounting war-related expenses. In their report for the year ending March



*Central Cemetery in Weston, showing the possible location of the rhododendron bushes that Rev. Calvin Topliff brought back from one of his trips to the South. (Photo by Pamela W. Fox)*

31, 1863, the selectmen reported that the Town had paid \$8,700 in bounties, \$154 for recruiting expenses, and \$273 for Rev. Topliff's expenses on his first trip south, for a total of \$9,128. The total for all town spending that year was \$20,072.82, meaning that nearly half of the expenditures were war-related. (44)

Of this amount, \$2,400 was borrowed for three years, at five percent and \$3,500 for five years, at five percent. Soldiers entitled to bounties had received \$2,485 worth of what were apparently I.O.U.'s payable by the Town Treasurer on demand, with six percent interest. The balance was taken out of available town funds.

According to the selectman's report for the year ending in March 1863, Weston was paying a total of about \$100 a month in state aid to the families of 15 volunteers, a total of 26 individuals. This aid was reimbursed by the state by deducting it from the tax that the town annually paid to the state. The selectmen noted that through their state tax payments, the Town of Weston was paying a considerable sum to aid families of volunteers in other towns as well.

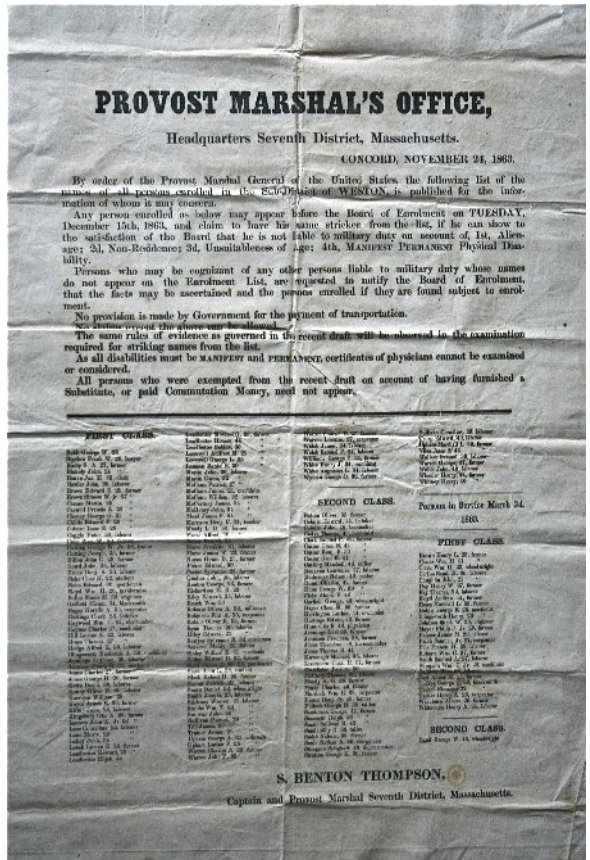


# The Draft Begins

By 1863, in the wake of military losses and a shortage of soldiers, President Lincoln instituted the first war-time draft of U.S. citizens in American history. The Confederate States also instituted a draft, one year earlier. Lincoln signed the Enrollment Act on March 3, 1863, requiring the enrollment of every male citizen and those immigrants who had filed for citizenship between ages twenty and forty-five. Quotas were set and states, through their municipalities, were responsible for filling these quotas either by draft or by volunteer enlistment encouraged by increasingly large bounties.

Draftees were exempted if they were disabled or sole supporters of dependent family members. Any draftee not excused could hire a substitute, guaranteeing exemption from any future draft, or pay a fee of \$300, providing exemption for one draft. The \$300 commutation fee soon became the most controversial part of the act, leading to the widespread charge in newspapers and political meetings that the Civil War was “a rich man’s war and a poor man’s fight.”

Under the Enrollment Act, a draft was ordered in July 1863 to furnish 300,000 men (the third call for 300,000.) The Weston Historical Society collection contains a handwritten “List of men drafted from the Town of Weston at Concord, July 18, 1863, containing 33 names. Of the 33 draftees, 28 were exempted, one paid the \$300 commutation fee, two found substitutes, and two entered the service. (45) One of these, Lucius A. Hill, was killed in



This printed communication of November 24, 1863 lists the names of all Weston men subject to the draft. They were instructed to appear in Concord on a certain day to have their names stricken from the list if they were a non-resident, unsuitable in age, or had manifest and permanent disabilities. (Weston Historical Society collections)



battle the following year.

The following October, a call came for another 300,000 men (the fourth call). To aid volunteering and to equalize bounties across the state, a state bounty of \$325 was offered. The Society's collection includes an 13 ! by 20 !-inch broadside of November 24, 1863 from the Provost Marshal's Office in Concord on which is printed the names of 111 Weston men in the "first class" category (up to age 34), 40 in "second class" (35-44), along with 26 first class and one second class person already in service as of March 3, 1863. One reason for the published list may have been to make widely available the names and ages of all men considered draft-eligible to ensure that municipal leaders were held accountable for the accuracy of the list and that any name omitted either purposefully or by mistake would be reported.

The broadside states that persons could appear before the Board of Enrollment on Tuesday December 15 and have their name stricken from the list if they were a non-resident, unsuitable in age, or had a "manifest permanent physical disability." The notice emphasized that "all disabilities must be MANIFEST and PERMANENT, certificates of physicians cannot be examined or considered." The notice also states that all persons exempted from the previous draft because of having furnished a substitute or paid commutation money need not appear.

Because of the widespread use of bounties to spur enlistment along with the option to obtain a substitute or pay commutation money, only a relatively small amount of men fought in the war as draftees. Conscription was most important for its social impact—in particular, the class and racial divisions it revealed and provoked. The practice of substitution and commutation fees provoked violent opposition to the law's enforcement.

## **The Recruiting Committee and the Citizens Recruiting Fund**

Weston's quota for the October 1863 draft was 16. The state bounty offer was \$325 but this time, in an effort to equalize payments across the state and decrease the competition between towns for recruits, municipalities were prohibited from offering additional bounties.

In response, the Town of Weston established a Citizen's Recruiting Fund and formed a Recruiting Committee composed of Rev. Calvin Topliff, Dr. Otis Hunt, Alonzo Fiske, Edward Childs, Edward Coburn, and Increase Leadbetter, Jr. While the law stated that municipalities could not offer additional bounties, it did not prohibit private citizens from providing additional funds to local recruitment

committees. The Recruiting Committee explained their subsequent actions as follows:

Observing how unequal the burdens of the war fell upon our citizens in case of draft, and believing that the only way of filling our quota speedily and avoiding a draft was to offer a Citizens' Bounty, therefore a Citizens' Meeting was called, and plans matured to raise by contribution, a sum equal to one-third of the town tax of 1862. The apportionment was made, and solicitors appointed in the several school districts. Otis E. Hunt was chosen Treasurer, and, at his instance, CH. Topliff Auditor. (46)

The Recruiting Committee appears to have contracted with a Boston man to supply men. A letter of Nov. 19, 1863, from Jacob [name illegible], 63 State St, Boston, states:

I have this day agreed to supply the town of Weston with any number of men less than 16 as the quota of said town and the said town is to pay me over and above the bounties One Hundred & Twenty Five Dollars to be paid me when the men are accepted by the United States. (47)

Prominent Weston citizens such as merchant Frederick T. Bush (see next article) were put in charge of raising money by subscription to provide additional bounties. Citizens were given a suggested "assessment" in proportion to their tax assessment. In November 1863 Bush submitted a list of subscribers in amounts ranging from \$3 to \$100 from Bush himself. Twenty-three people contributed, for a total of \$527. Bush also submitted the following report indicating that, with few exceptions, Weston residents had contributed generously:

I have the pleasure to hand you herewith a list of the subscribers to the above fund, and further to state that I have called upon all the residents in my district.

It will be as gratifying to my townsmen to know, as it is to me to state to them, that with a few exceptions, I met with the warmest reception and cheerful response to the call, many of them offering to increase their subscriptions if necessary.

I regret to state that three parties refused to lend their aid to the object, still trust the amount subscribed will compare favorable with the other districts in the town. (48)

Another citizen fundraiser, John Lawrence Slack, wrote to Alonzo S. Fiske on March 21, 1864, giving the names of 14 people who had contributed a total of \$76 for the purpose of raising recruits. According to Lamson's history, the Town raised a total of \$5,104 by voluntary subscription to aid in the recruiting.(49)

## **Additional Calls for Troops**

In February and March 1864 there were additional calls for men for a total of some half-million men, with Weston's quota set at 12, since the town had a "sur-

plus standing to our credit.” According to the “Report of the Recruiting Committee,” town officials again raised money and went to the marketplace:

To supply the men required by these calls, it was decided that the solicitors should go over the ground again with an assessment half the former, and the Recruiting Committee was directed to go early to the market and secure the men before the price by competition should advance. This prompt action secured the funds, and consequently the men at a moderate price.

In the early part of last summer, in anticipation of another requisition, we made arrangements for more men. Towns had received permission to pay \$125 in addition to other bounties but the price of volunteers was rapidly advancing. It was judged necessary to ask from the citizens another assessment equal to the last, that is, one-sixth of the tax of 1862, and also to appeal to the enrolled men for a per capita tax of \$5 each. The Recruiting Committee was instructed to secure twelve men, which with the surplus standing to our credit, it was believed, would be our full share for a call of 500,000 men.

By keeping ourselves ahead of each call with a small surplus of men for any exigency, and by securing a good share in the distribution of the Navy credits, we had more than men enough for the call of December last. . . .(50)

The report summarized the town’s recruiting history from October 1863 through publication of the *Town Report for the Year Ending March 15, 1865*:

Since the Committee was chosen [in October 1863], we have paid a bounty to 47 men, and have received credit for 54; calls have been issued for 1,500,000 men, including naval credits and those held by the draft of 1863, and every man called for from Weston has been promptly furnished. This very gratifying result has been attained by the hearty cooperation of all the people. Instances have been very few in which persons have withheld their full measure of support in this work; while no very weighty burden has fallen upon any individual or family, as certainly would have been the case if the 47 men had been obtained by repeated drafts. (51)

The report ends by saying that the committee is confident that no further money will be needed, indicating their confidence that the war would soon be over. Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia surrendered on April 9, 1865.

by Pamela W. Fox

**PART II, in the Spring 2012 *Weston Historical Society Bulletin*, will include information on the 12 Weston soldiers who died, transcriptions of letters from the field and information on the National Soldiers Home at the John Quincy Adams Farm in Weston, which operated from 1863 to about 1871.**

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## Footnotes

(1) Faust, xi; (2) Sears, 6 and Lamson, 142; (3) Lamson, 137-38; (4) author's note: I find it interesting that Lamson does not mention Willard, whereas Sears devotes a long paragraph to his praise in his address at the reception for returned soldiers, 14; (5) Hastings, 6; (6) Bartol, 14-15; (7) Sears, 14; (8) Hastings, 1; (9) Report of Recruiting Committee, 1865 *Town Report*, 18; (10) Lamson, 139 and military lists, WHS collections; (11) Faust, 3; (12) Sears, 6; (13) Gov. Andrew's

order, WHS collections; (14) WHS collections; (15) *The Civil War* by Ken Burns (website); (16)(17) WHS collections; (18) Report of Recruiting Committee, 1865 *Town Report*, 18; (19) 1889 Baptist church history, 14; (20) (21) WHS collections; (22) WHS military enlistment lists; (23) Sears, 14; (24) Lamson, 140; (25) WHS collections, Alonzo Fiske to William Schouler, Adj. General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, August 30, 1862; (26) WHS collections; Drake was one of Weston's nine-months men; (27) (28) (29) (30) (31) WHS collections; (32) Sears, 7; (33) Hastings, "Re....Toplift" (sic), 1; (34) Sears, 11; (35) Faust, 85; (36) *Encyclopedia of Death and Dying*, Civil War, U.S (website); (37) Hastings, "Re....Rev. Toplift" (sic), 2; (38) *Town Report Year ending March 31, 1864*, 10; (39) Lamson, 143; (40) Letter courtesy Eloise Kenney, descendent of Stimpson; (41) Information provided by Eloise Kenney; (42) Faust, 236; (43) WHS collections; (44) Report of the Selectmen, *Town Report fort Year ending March 1863*, 4 (45) Lamson, 140, and WHS collection handwritten "List of men drafted from the Town of Weston at Concord, July 18, 1863" containing 33 names; (46) Report of the Recruiting Committee, 19; (47) (48) WHS collections; (49) Lamson, 143; (50) (51) Report of the Recruiting Committee, 19-20.

## Weston's China Trader: Frederick Thomas Bush

*By Isabella Jancourtz*

China trader and diplomat Frederick Thomas Bush (1815 – 1887) arrived in Weston in 1856 with his wife Elizabeth DeBlois and their five young children: Charles, Frederick, Amelia, Fannie, and Sophia. The young family had lived in China for nine years, and the three girls were born there. They sailed home on the *Flying Cloud*, a record-breaking clipper ship.

The Bushes bought the old Starr Farm on South Avenue from a friend, Dr. Henry Ingersoll Bowditch, who had owned it from 1851 to 1856. Dr. Bowditch was the son of Salem's famous navigator of the seas, Nathaniel Bowditch. Frederick and Elizabeth called their new home *Brookside*. Soon there were four more children: William, Walter, Henry, and Donald.

F.T. Bush was born in Taunton in 1815 to a family of merchants who had started the first iron forges in America in the mid-1600s. Prior to that time, all pots, pans, swords, ploughshares, and other iron implements had to be shipped to the colonies from England. Trade was in his blood. His

*Photo of Frederick Thomas Bush taken by his neighbor, Francis Blake. Bush, a China trader and diplomat, was among the first of many business and professional men to settle in Weston in the mid-19th century. (Courtesy Massachusetts Historical Society)*



brothers Samuel Leonard Bush and James Phillips Bush were also Boston merchants.

As a very young man, Bush left his family in Taunton for the busy port of Boston, the hub of an ever-expanding universe of international trade. At age 26 he was married. Two years later he sailed to China aboard the *Probus*. It was 1843, one year after the Treaty of Nanking that ended the first Opium War. Hong Kong had been ceded to the British; and the ports of Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo, and Shanghai were open to foreign traders. Although the United States had not been a combatant, through diplomacy American traders were given the same rights that the British had fought for in the first Opium War.

Opportunities for trade had never been better. Soon Elizabeth Bush, accompanied by three servants to help care for baby Fred and toddler Charles, sailed on the clipper *Rainbow* for the trading center of Whampoa to join her husband. Within two years Frederick Bush had established his own firm, Bush & Co. and was also appointed the first American Consul to Hong Kong, serving in that capacity from 1845 to 1852. He was also a director of the China Mutual Insurance Company.

These were eventful years for the Consul and the fleet. There was the Sino-Portuguese War of 1849, as a result of which Macau was ceded to Portugal. That same year, 16 American sailors from the whaler *USS Lagoda* were shipwrecked on the Japanese island of Yeso and imprisoned. Commodore James Glynn sailed into Nagasaki Harbor on the sloop of war *USS Preble* and, after a show of strength, successfully obtained the release of the survivors, who were brought to Hong Kong before finally being returned to the United States. Commodore Glynn subsequently

proposed that the U.S. government open relations with Japan (then a “Closed Country”) through diplomacy or by force, if necessary. This led to the expeditions of Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853 and 1854.

The China trade was booming, bringing prosperity to American ports from Boston to New York City, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. American ships traded their cargoes of gold and silver bullion, tobacco, candles, coal, whiskey, ginseng, hides, and other products for spices, Rose Medallion and other Chinese export porcelain, many varieties of tea and silk, lacquerware, fans, and furniture. In India some traders also took opium on board to sell in China or trade for export items.

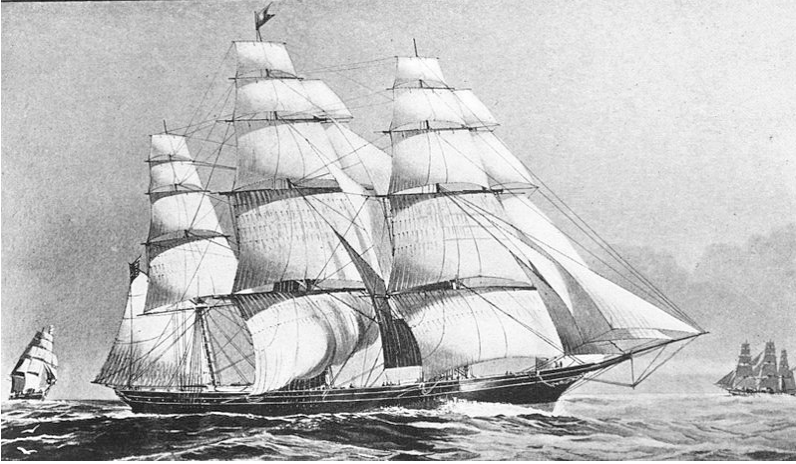
Like Frederick Thomas Bush, many of the China traders were Massachusetts men who took great risks and made (or sometimes lost) considerable fortunes, among them George Cabot, Thomas Handasyd Perkins and his brother James, Thomas and James Lamb, William and Russell Sturgis, John Murray Forbes, Robert Bennet Forbes and Joseph Peabody. Many of Boston’s great institutions, such as the Perkins School for the Blind, were endowed by these merchants and their families.

From 1842 until a few years before his death in 1887, Bush was engaged in a very successful international trade partnership with Samuel Comstock. Bush & Comstock owned ships that stopped at ports all over the world from Hong Kong and Canton to San Francisco, Manila, Hawaii, the West Indies, and South America.

The Comstock Family Business Records, located at Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, contain a treasure trove of letters, ledgers, log books, and ships’ papers donated by the Comstock family. Included in the collection is an account book donated by Bush’s grandson, J.P. Lane, then living at 92 South Avenue. Dated January 16, 1945 and addressed to Professor Gras, it states in part: “My brother, next door, lives in the old Bush homestead, which you might enjoy visiting sometime. It contains many interesting bits of historical value, including grandfather’s commission from the British government to be the U.S. consul at Hong Kong. He was a merchant [and] one-time a partner in Bush, Comstock & Co and the owner of a number of ships.”

When the Bush family moved to Weston in the mid-1800s, the population was around 1,200. Then as now, much of the life of the community revolved around its schools, churches, and the entertainment provided by amateur theater groups, in which the Bush children participated.

Frederick Thomas Bush was very much a family man, by all accounts devoted to his wife and nine children. His unmarried sister Mary Burroughs Leonard Bush lived with the family in her later years. His famous



*The Frederick Bush family returned from China on the Flying Cloud, a clipper ship that set the record in 1854 for the fastest voyage between New York and San Francisco. This image is from a 1919 book The China Clippers, 4th edition by Basil Lubbock. (Courtesy of Wikipedia)*

neighbor Francis Blake took charming photographs of Bush and some of his children. Years later, Blake's son Benjamin married Bush's granddaughter Ruth Field.

Bush named his oldest son, Charles Green Bush, after an older brother who had died at age 22. Charles grew up to become "the dean of American political cartooning," working in New York for *Harper's Magazine* and various New York newspapers. He lived in Staten Island with his wife Cora Candler and their three children: Frederica DeBlois, Charles Green Bush III, and Lucy.

Frederick DeBlois Bush, second of the five children who had lived in China before coming to Weston, returned to China as a young man and lived much of his life in Shanghai. Of the three girls born in China, Sophia died at an early age, while Amelia and Fannie both married local boys and spent their lives in Weston, raising several children with their husbands, Joseph Warren Field and David Weston Lane respectively. Eventually the elder Frederick Bush had five grandchildren living nearby: Joseph Warren Field, Jr. and his sister Ruth at 639 Boston Post Road, and Elizabeth, Robert, and John Philip Lane living next door to him at 92 South Avenue.

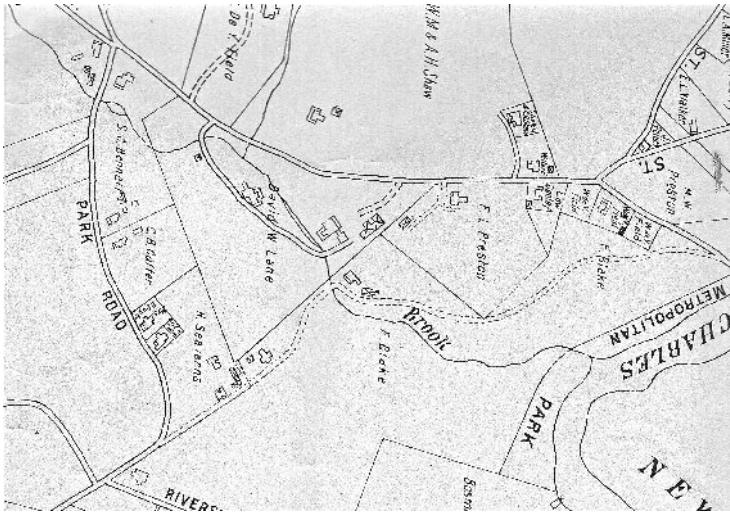
William Caine Bush was a Boston merchant and never married. His brother Walter Murray Bush, also a merchant and unmarried, moved to



New York. Henry Sturgis Bush was a Boston stockbroker who also had a ranch in Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory. His first wife Lilla Goodell died young and he then married Lucretia McMurtrie, with whom he had five children: Maria Louisa (who died in infancy), Horace McMurtrie, Mary Pickering, Lucretia Goddard, and Jocelyn DeBois Bush. Henry Kenneth Bush, his only child with his first wife, died as a result of injuries sustained in World War I.



*Two images of the F.T. Bush home Brookside, which once stood on South Avenue in Weston. The delicate pencil drawing, owned by the Weston Historical Society, was done by the Bush's oldest child, Charles Green Bush, when he was only 18, in 1860. The photograph below shows the house and barn from a different angle and was taken in the mid-1950s, before the buildings were demolished to make way for the Massachusetts Turnpike.*

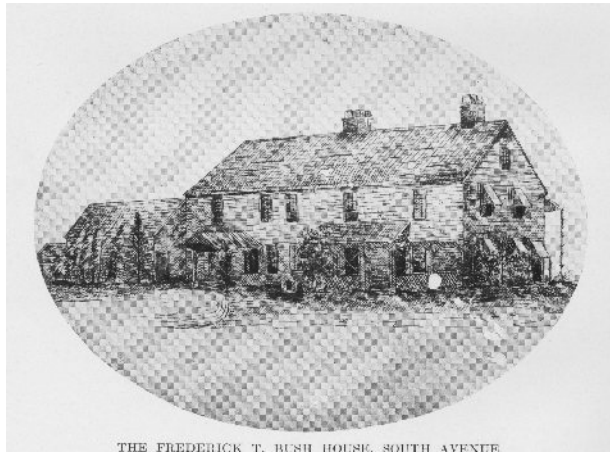


*Detail of the 1908 Middlesex County Atlas showing the David W. Lane property on South Avenue. Frederick Bush's daughter Fannie married David Weston Lane and lived at Brookside. Note that there are two houses and a barn shown on the property. These buildings are depicted in the photos and illustrations on pages 33 and 35.*

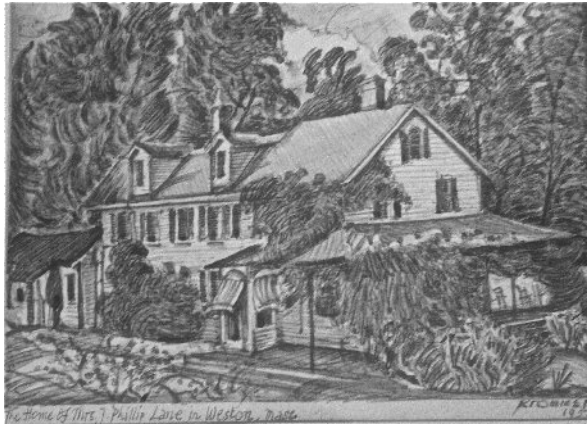
Donald Fairfax Bush married Edith Westervelt Low on April 26, 1897, in what the *New York Times* called one of the fashionable weddings of the month. They lived in New York City with their son, Donald Fairfax Bush, Jr. Donald Sr. was a wholesaler of iron and steel and a senior partner at Crocker Brothers, iron merchants. Although Frederick Thomas Bush died 10 years before his youngest son married at 34, he must have been delighted in his choice of careers, the iron trade of their ancestors

Sadly, the old Bush homestead *Brookside* and the adjacent house at 92 South Avenue are no longer standing. The two houses and the barn were demolished in the 1950s to make way for the Massachusetts Turnpike.

*The author wishes to acknowledge the generous assistance of Pamela W. Fox, president of the Weston Historical Society and author of Farm Town to Suburb: The History and Architecture of Weston, Massachusetts 1830-1980 (2002) and of the late Elaine Bush Prince, author of the unpublished genealogy A Prominent Boston Family: The Descendants of Thomas Bush of Taunton (2000). She also thanks her husband, Samuel D. Bush IV for his support and encouragement. Frederick Thomas Bush is his great-, great-, great-uncle, In an interesting twist of fate, Samuel spent his teenage years living at 639 Boston Post Road, where his Uncle Fred must have visited often, as it was the home of his daughter Amelia and son-in-law Joseph W. Field.*



THE FREDERICK T. BUSH HOUSE, SOUTH AVENUE



*Three images of the second house on the Bush property, later numbered 92 South Avenue. (Above) Illustration from Lamson's History of the Town of Weston, showing the old Starr Farm before it was extensively remodeled by Frederick T. Bush in 1858. (Center) 1951 pencil and watercolor drawing of the house (gift of Mrs. Patricia Rice) (Below) Photograph from the mid-1950s, before the house was demolished to make way for the Massachusetts Turnpike. (Weston Historical Society photo)*

## ***With Grateful Thanks***

**To Mrs. Patricia Rice** of Maine for her gift of a pencil and watercolor painting entitled “The Home of Mrs. J. Philip Lane in Weston, Massachusetts,” signed “Krominst, 1951.” By happy coincidence, the new painting depicts one of the houses owned by Frederick T. Bush (see article beginning on page 29 and image on page 35). Thanks also to Linda Carville for her help with this gift.

**To Mary Pickard Winsor** of Toronto, Canada, for her donation of a pewter trophy cup awarded to Paul Winsor Jr. in 1914 by the Weston Athletic Association.

**To Lucy Rand, Laura Payson, Charles O. Richardson Jr. and Mabel Richardson** for their gift of a pastel painting by artist Henry Davenport, commissioned by Mabel Richardson for her father, Charles O. Richardson, on the occasion of his 90th birthday, November 10, 1961. The painting shows the rear of the Richardson family home at 6 Conant Road. Thanks also to Faith Rand Donahue for her help with this gift.

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[www.westonhistory.org](http://www.westonhistory.org)

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