



Colonel Francis P. Ripley (1841 - 1939) was the inspiration for this oil painting by Gertrude Fiske of an aging soldier in his blue Union uniform. When he died at age 98, Ripley was Weston's last Civil War veteran. He is pictured clutching a cane with a gilded head, thought to be the now lost Boston Post cane that was once passed consecutively to the town's oldest inhabitant.

During his service in the Grand Army of the Republic, Ripley was severely wounded in the Battle of Antietam and left on the field for dead. He spent seven months in an improvised hospital in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where he was nursed back to health by his future wife, Laura Ritner. After the war, Ripley returned to Pennsylvania to marry Miss Ritner. In 1879 he gave up his job in Boston, bought a farm on Ripley Lane, and "retired" to Weston. As an old man, Frank Ripley loved to receive callers, who were seated by the antique fireplace and regaled with Civil War stories. (Collection of the Weston Historical Society)

The Civil War in Weston

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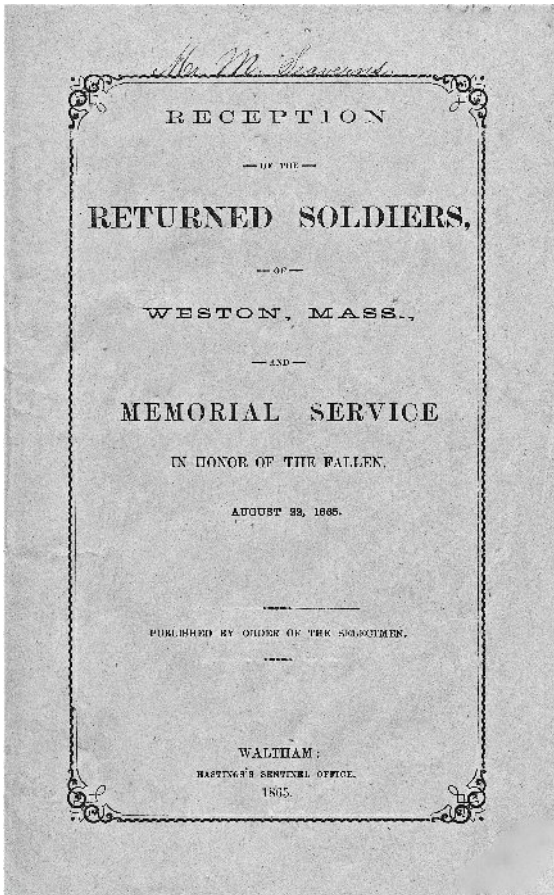
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Weston Honors its Soldiers



Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia surrendered on April 9, 1865. While this date is considered the end of the war, Confederate troops continued to fight in other locations through June.

On August 22, Weston held a reception for returned soldiers and memorial service in honor of the fallen. Waltham newspapers reported that the memorial service was held in the Unitarian Church and commenced about 1:30 p.m. with music furnished by Gilmore's Brass Band of Boston. The church was decorated for the occasion with "the names and places of battle of the deceased soldiers, trimmed in evergreen and black, surmounted with stars, stripes, and mottoes [such as] "Peace be within thy walls and prosperity" and "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The pulpit was draped with the American flag, and in front was a harp trimmed with flowers. The church was crowded.

Rev. Mr. Topliff, minister of First Baptist Church, opened the service with a prayer. A pamphlet was later printed describing the event and including the full text of the address of the Rev. E. H. Sears, minister of First Parish Church.

At the close, the assembly under the charge of Chief Marshall Alonzo S. Fiske formed a procession consisting of returned soldiers, invited guests, and citizens generally. It moved to the Town Hall [the old Town Hall across from First Parish Church] escorted by Gilmore's Band. Originally, it was intended that refreshments be served in "Lamson's Grove," an area near the present Town Hall. Ta-

bles had been prepared but owing to rain in the morning they were moved to the Town Hall, which was draped with the American flag.

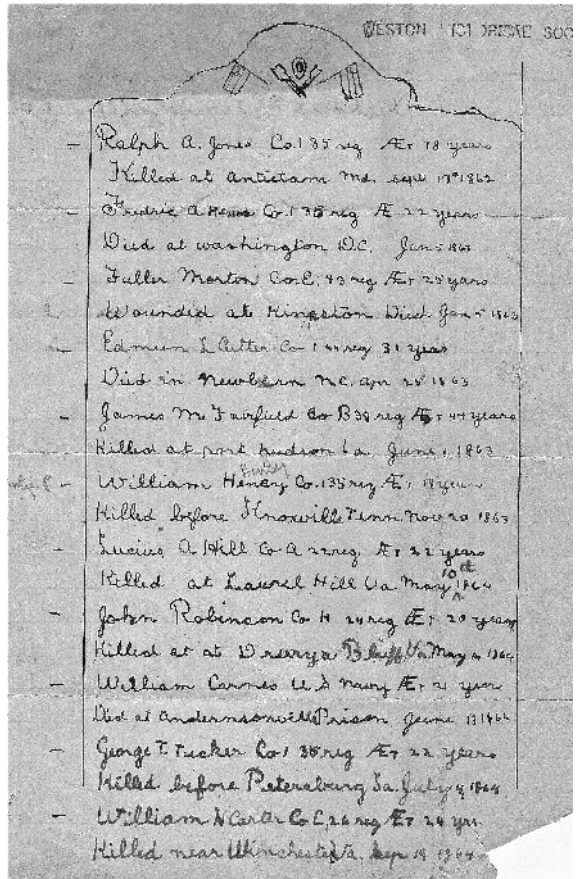
After a “plentiful repast” furnished by the citizens of Weston, the President of the Day, Edwin Hobbs, called upon R.F. Fuller to read a poem. The printed pamphlet includes the text of Fuller’s lengthy poem, which recounted the history of the war and the experiences of Weston soldiers, in iambic pentameter.

The town appointed a committee consisting of Edwin Hobbs, Isaac Coburn, and Alonzo S. Fiske to consider how to enlarge the Town Hall and erect a memorial to the fallen soldiers. They decided on a marble roll of honor. S.S. Woodcock was paid \$30 for the design of the memorial plaque and Charles E. Hall of Boston was paid \$525 for making it. The work was done in 1866. The town spent a total of \$4,120 on this project, most for the enlargement of the Town Hall. A complete list of expenses is included in the *Town Report* for the year ending 1867.

In his *History of the Town of Weston*, Lamson gives the figure of \$18,070 as the grand total of Weston’s war expenses, which, he notes “must be admitted as a very liberal and patriotic showing.” In addition, Weston paid \$4,870 toward state aid for the years 1862 to 1868.

The Twelve who Died

In all, the number of men furnished by Weston between 1861 and 1865 was 126. Twelve names are engraved on the marble roll of honor. Of these, eight were killed in battle, three died of wounds, and one died in prison. It is important to note that other Weston men also died in the war but are not listed on the monument because they enlisted from



Rough sketch for the Civil War memorial pictured on the next page. (Collection of the Weston Historical Society)

other towns. For example, Edmund Cutter's brother Frederick enlisted from Newton and was killed at Gettysburg in 1863.

Below is a list of the 12 soldiers memorialized on the plaque, with brief biographical information largely taken from Rev. Sears's address at the reception for returned soldiers.

Ralph A. Jones (35th Regiment), descendent of one of Weston's early settlers, killed at Antietam, Maryland, at age 18, September 17, 1862. (additional information in the Fall 2011 *WHS Bulletin*)

Frederick A. Hews (35th Regiment), member of Weston's prominent family of Weston pottery makers; died in a hospital in Washington, D.C., at age 22, January 5, 1863.

Fuller Morton (43rd Regiment), a resident of Weston for two years, mortally wounded in the battle of Kinston, North Carolina, died in a hospital at Newbern, North Carolina, at age 25, January 6, 1863.

Edmund L. Cutter (44th Regiment), one of the nine-months men and member of one of Weston's oldest families. He was quoted as saying "I don't want to go but somebody must go, and I have no family dependent upon me—count me in when wanted." (54) He died in a hospital in Newbern, N.C. at age 31, April 25, 1863. His brother Frederick enlisted from Newton and was killed at Gettysburg.



The marble Civil War memorial was originally located in the 1847 Town Hall, which was demolished after the present Town Hall was constructed in 1917. The memorial was then installed in the reading room of what is now the Old Library. When the present Town Hall addition was constructed about 2002, it was moved to its present location in the new entrance lobby.

James M. Fairfield (38th Regiment), a resident of Weston for two years, fell in an assault on the defenses of the Mississippi River town of Fort Hudson, Louisiana, at age 44, June 1, 1863.

William Henzy (also written Henzye) (35th Regiment), resident of Weston for one year, killed on picket-duty near Knoxville, Tennessee, at age 18, November 20, 1863.

Lucius A. Hill (22nd Regiment), not a resident of Weston but counted toward the Weston quota, killed at Laurel Hill, Virginia, at age 22, May 10, 1864.

John Robinson (24th Regiment) killed at Drewry's Bluff, Virginia, at age 20, May 14, 1864. According to Rev. Sear's address, Robinson was active in organizing the drill club and enlisted early in the war. He was in 14 battles, among them the battle of Newbern, the storming of Fort Wagner, and the night attack upon Fort Sumter. He re-enlisted in January 1864 and joined the Army of the James under General Butler, fought with it in their way up the river, and was killed instantly as they were destroying the Petersburg Railroad. Drewry's Bluff was key to river defenses protecting the Confederate capital of Richmond.

William Carnes (U.S. Navy), from Swampscott, died at Andersonville Prison, Georgia, at age 21, June 13, 1864.

George T. Tucker, (35th Regiment), one of two or three brothers in the service, killed by a sharpshooter in the trenches before Petersburg, Virginia, at age 22, July 4, 1864.

William H. Carter (26th Regiment) According to Rev. Sears's address, he served out his time and came home. "But I cannot stay at home so long as this war is unfinished." He re-enlisted and was plunged into the fierce conflicts of the Shenandoah Valley. He fell at Winchester, Virginia, September 19, 1864, mortally wounded, at age 24. According to Sears, he was taken by the rebels but retaken by his comrades and placed in the hospital where he sent his last message to his mother "Tell her I died fighting for the glorious Stars and Stripes."

Wm. Cutter Stimpson Jr. (35th Regiment), wounded in the Battle of Fredericksburg, was in the hospital for a year, rejoined the army and was killed in the battle near Poplar Spring Church, Virginia, at age 29, on September 20, 1864, where General Grant was trying to extend his lines and capture the last rail line into Petersburg, Virginia. He left a family back in Weston. His wife, Harriet, was the daughter of Geo. W. Cutting (Sr), owner of G.W. Cutting & Sons general store. Harriet returned to live with her family in their house, which was located where the Old Library is today. Their two children, Clara (born 1861) and Charles (born 1864), grew up with the Jones sisters, who had lost their mother.

The Soldiers' National Home in Weston

The Civil War left thousands of men with war-related injuries and amputations. For at least a decade, from the early 1860s through the early 1870s, some of those with no family to care for them found a home at the "Soldiers' National Home on the John Quincy Adams Farm" in Weston.

The J.Q. Adams farm totaled some four hundred acres on the north and south sides of South Avenue at the intersection of Wellesley Street. In the 18th century, the property had belonged to Moses Gill, who sold it to Ward Nicholas Boylston in 1805. When Boylston died in 1828, he bequeathed it to his friend, then President John Quincy Adams, and it remained in the Adams family as part of a trust until purchased by General Charles Jackson Paine in 1882. It is now the site of the Weston High and Middle Schools.

During and after the Civil War, the Adams trust was administered by Charles Francis Adams, then serving as Minister to England. According to a fundraising appeal of 1864, printed below, the farm with its "dilapidated" but "perfectly comfortable" farmhouse, was leased about 1863 "at a low rent" for the purpose of providing a permanent

DON'T FORGET THIS URGENT REQUEST!

An Appeal to the Generous for Crippled and Invalid Soldiers.

SOLDIERS' NATIONAL HOME,

ON THE JOHN QUINCY ADAMS FARM, WESTON, MASS.

Professor H. W. LONGFELLOW, GEN. BUTLER, and many other eminent men are contributors.

This place has four hundred acres of land, and is to be a PERMANENT HOME FOR INVALID SOLDIERS. It was formerly the old Gov. Gill Farm, subsequently the Ward Nicholas Boylston place, and bequeathed by him to President John Quincy Adams, and his son, Charles Francis Adams, Minister to England, now holds it in trust. An association of gentlemen have leased it for a long number of years, and are determined to see no invalid soldier suffering. Boston and Massachusetts have the reputation of doing more for this class of invalids than they are aware of; and we are confident that the old Bay State merchants and others will never turn a deaf ear to that class of men who have forfeited life, health and limb for a continuance of our Glorious Union. Several having resorted at this Home, have re-enlisted, and are now back in the Army. Lieut. George W. Calkins, prisoner of war in Richmond and other Southern dungeons for more than a year, is authorized to collect.

TO LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

Do call immediately and help us prepare for the sick and wounded coming on shortly. HEADQUARTERS, 19 CHARLESTOWN STREET.

SAMUEL POOR, JR., Vice-President.

DISABLED SOLDIERS' NATIONAL HOME.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS FARM.

A CARD.

The undersigned, in behalf of the Directors, would thank the noble and generous patrons of the John Quincy Adams National Farm Home for Invalid Soldiers, for past favors. No one any longer asks if this Home is needed. It is the only Farm Home in the United States. Every merchant says it is just what is needed to resuscitate and recruit those who have gone out to protect our gold and silver, and our homes. Gentlemen of every shade of politics are becoming interested. This is no experiment—it is a success. It is already in operation, feeding and employing all who go there. There are about 400 acres of land; and if those who feel interested in this enterprise will call at 19 Charlestown Street, upon Samuel Poor, Jr., Vice-President, they will get full particulars.

We beg of ladies and gentlemen to help us prepare to make these noble and brave men comfortable for the coming winter.

Lieut. GEO. W. CALKINS is nobly laboring for them. While he was a prisoner in the hands of the rebels for more than a year, his mother was thrown into a declivity, lingered along until the 16th inst., and died. It is supposed that her over-anxiety hastened her decease, while he was suffering hunger and nakedness, suffering for bread many a day for thirteen long months within the walls of Charlestown Jail and Libby Prison.

True, others are sufferers; many a brave woman is ebbing out her life blood in prayer, as she did, for only sons in the army. Many a heart has been made sad, many eyes are whose cheeks have paled as they went out to meet returning regiments, welcomed by cheering thousands, and were answered, "He died upon the field," or "He died a prisoner." Let those of us who remain at home, do all the good we can to our brave returned soldiers.

SERGEANT NICHOLAS LAWLESS, minus a leg and some of his fingers shot off, is the gentlemanly Superintendent. The Farm is in Weston, three miles from Auburndale. JOHN MEADY, JR., at the latter place, will direct all visitors to the Home.

SAMUEL POOR, JR., Vice-President, 19 Charlestown Street.

The above notice is a plea for funds to aid crippled and invalid soldiers at the "Soldiers' National Home" in Weston. A photocopy of this appeal was found in the Weston Historical Society files as this article was being researched. The little known soldiers' home, which operated in Weston from 1863 to about 1871, is described in detail on page 23, thanks to discovery of a document at the Massachusetts Historical Society.

home for invalid soldiers. The “benevolent public” was asked to support this effort financially, as the farm did not produce enough food for the “twenty cripples” then residing there, including “four of them with only one leg, two or three with one arm, one shot through the kidneys and all used up in one way or another for life.”

The Soldiers’ National Home was administered by Samuel Poor, Jr. of Boston, who is described in fundraising appeals as vice-president. In one such appeal, Poor explains the organization’s mission:

An association of gentlemen have leased it for a long number of years, and are determined to see no invalid soldier suffering. Boston and Massachusetts have the reputation of doing more for this class of invalids than they are aware of; and we are confident that the old Bay State merchants and others will never turn a deaf ear to that class of men who have periled life, health and limb for a continuance of our Glorious Union.

This document states that “Professor H.W. Longfellow, Gen. Butler, and many other eminent men are contributors.” Another appeal states that “No one any longer asks if this Home is needed. It is the only Farm Home in the United States.”

Day to day supervision of the farm was the responsibility of Sergeant Nicholas Lawless, who himself had lost a leg and several fingers in battle. The appeal printed below includes fascinating details about farm operations, the farmhouse, food, the small library, the cost of maintaining the Home, and even the fact that donation of “a few bath tubs would be beneficial.”

AN APPEAL TO THE BENEVOLENT.

THE SOLDIER’S HOME ON THE JOHN QUINCY ADAMS FARM AT WESTON.

[From the *Saturday Evening Express* of May 14, 1864]

Now of all other times since the war began, the benevolent public must open their purses for the crippled soldiers. All of forty thousand wounded soldiers must be provided for, and our sympathies must be put into practice. The public hospitals are full, and the Sanitary and Christian Commissions are doing their duty. But the poor soldier who has lost his leg or his arm, who has neither home nor money, must be provided for, and in such a way that his pride will not be wounded. Permanent homes should be provided either by the State, city or towns, and the maimed soldier without friends or family should be made to feel that he has a home for life.

The above remarks occurred to us on the occasion of a visit to the Soldiers' Home at Weston, on the John Quincy Adams Farm on Wednesday last. This Home is established at Weston, about two miles from Auburndale, on the old Gov. Gill farm, now owned by Hon Charles Francis Adams, our minister to England, and leased for this purpose, at a low rent. The house is old and dilapidated, having been built in 1743—but is perfectly comfortable and watertight, and has recently been whitewashed outside and inside. There is no barn or sheds connected, and a good and generous neighbor (Deacon Jones) provides covering for a cow which belongs to the house; and he also boards the horse. There is plenty of wood on the farm, but every stick cut has to be paid for—the felling of the trees being done by the soldiers.

There are now upwards of twenty cripples at this House, four of them with only one leg, two or three with one arm, one shot through the kidneys and all used up in one way or another for life. One poor fellow was put under the sod last winter, having been sent from a place in this city all broken out with the small pox (sic). They all appear contented and happy, seemingly having made up their minds that they will be provided for in future. The superintendent, Mr. Lawless, with one leg, and his wife as matron, are paid \$30 per month, and a nice tidy house they make of it. The food is plain, consisting of flour and corn bread, meat at dinner, coffee and chocolate for breakfast, and tea for supper. For the sick, little niceties of jellies, and crackers and milk are also provided.

The farm land is very poor and run out, and quantities of manure is needed in order to produce a crop. Yet some six acres will be put under cultivation this spring, and it is calculated that hay enough can be cut to keep one horse and cow through the winter. Vegetables of all kinds will also be raised. They have only now about half-a-dozen hens, and as they have been setting, the soldiers have been deprived of eggs the past winter and spring. A new flag and hal-yards is wanted, as the sight of the floating stars and stripes gives zest and comfort to the poor fellows. On the occasion of our visit, three were employed on an embankment boiling the grease condiments for a barrel of soft soap. They have but one pig.

The cots, mattresses and quilt coverings are comfortable, only more are needed for the additional applications daily made. Groceries are purchased in Boston and Auburndale, and great economy has been used in selections of the same. Clothing of all kinds is constantly wanted, as we perceived the needle was daily used to keep up a neat outside appearance. Water, cool and limpid, is in profusion, and the soldiers need no urging in its use, although a few bath tubs would be beneficial.

Through the beneficence of a few individuals a small library has been gathered, the books of which are well thumbed. Intense interest was manifested to get hold of the news of the recent battles, and the countenances of all

beamed with delight on reading the recent victories by Gen. Grant. Three cheers were heartily given upon reading of the gallant victories won by our soldiers.

The cost of maintaining this Home has been considerable, but owing to the general munificence of the benevolent through the indomitable exertions of Lieut. Caleff, treasurer, and Mr. Poor, the Vice-President, the Home is kept out of debt, but with little money in the treasury. The cost of carrying on the Home is about \$100 per week, which includes aid to soldiers outside who make applications and are really needy.

On Sunday public services are held in what was once the parlor and receiving room of Gov. Gill, by the Rev. Mr. Farnham, of Boston, who is Chaplain of the institution. Some of the neighbors attend the services, and there is need of a larger room, and it is the calculation to erect a large tent for the same on the green in front of the house. With the tent, stools and settees are needed, as there is not half chairs enough now to accommodate those who take an interest in the religious welfare of the inmates of the Home. Mr. Farnham is truly beloved, although many of the soldiers are Catholics.

Having seen the operations of this truly benevolent institution we can in all honesty say that it is worthy of the patronage of the public; not only money, but groceries, clothing, shoes, hats or caps, bedding and tables, chairs, bedsteads, fish, meat, seeds, tobacco, crutches, canes, and a thousand other things are actually needed and would be thankfully accepted. The Head Quarters of this institution is at No. 19 Charlestown Street, Boston.

There should be a permanent fund raised to sustain this institution, and we understand exertions are to be made to accomplish it. To this end an appeal will be shortly made to the public. In the mean time (sic) the benevolent are cautioned against contributing to any but authorized agents.

The Soldiers' Home on the John Quincy Adams Farm at Weston has been established nearly a year and a half, and about two hundred cripples have been relieved and gone on their way rejoicing, making room for others. There has been about \$5000 received and expended for the same. Further particulars can be obtained by calling at the Home in Weston or of Mr. Poor at No. 19 Charlestown street, or the Treasurer, Lieut. Caleff, 37 Indiana Place, Boston.

- References: 1) Boston Almanac and Boston Directories, 1861 - 1871.
2) "An appeal to the benevolent: the Soldier's (sic) Home on the John Quincy Adams Farm at Weston , Boston: s.n. 1864, 1 sheet, 23 X 13 cm, Notes "From the Saturday Evening Express of May 14th, 1864. Located at the Massachusetts Historical Society

Civil War Letters in the Collection of the Weston Historical Society

George Crosby to Alonzo Fiske, 1864

[Editor's note: The Weston Historical Society would like to thank John Saylor, Weston High School Class of 2011, for his transcriptions of the letters of George Crosby and Samuel Patch. The letters are addressed to Alonzo Fiske, the selectman in charge of recruiting soldiers to meet Weston's enlistment quotas.]

February 10, 1864, Camp at Rappahannock Station

Friend Fiske,

I write to you these few lines hoping to find you in good health as it leaves me at present [,] thank the lord. I have been a long time getting here. I was 7 days coming from Boston to Alexandria [Va.] and we had a strong guard with [sic] us just the same as if we were conscripts. When we got to Alexandria we were put in the soldiers rest. It is a large building built expressly for the soldiers that are travelling backwards & forwards. We were there about 2 weeks and then we were sent to our regiments. We have been here about 4 days. We have very comfortable log huts to live in. We have plenty to eat. We have a drill about 3 time [sic] a week and we have a very good set of officers and a good captain. I am very well satisfied with my battery. We have 6 10-pound guns and 156 men when the battery has its compliment. Men are afraid to list for this battery because it has the name of a fighting battery. Where we are camped there is a burying ground all around us where a lot of our soldiers buried there [sic]. There was a great battle fought there. We expect to be in the winter quarters until about March. It is not so cold here as it is in Boston. Our camp is within 30 yards of the Rappahannock River. I am in very good health and spirits and I hope you are the same [,] thank the lord for it. I am going in with the intention of seeing this rebellion put down before next fall. I am going to try my best to do it. I think my battery can do its share. Soane is getting along very well. He is very well satisfied with his place. Give my best respects to all my friends in town and may they all have success and happiness. I have no more to say at present. From your most obedient servant

George Crosby



Ambrotype of William H. Carter, who died at Winchester, Virginia, September 19, 1864, mortally wounded, at age 24. (Collection of the Weston Historical Society)

April 3, 1864, Camp at Rappahannock Station

Friend Fiske,

I take pleasure in writing to you a few lines hoping to find you in good health as it leaves me at present— thanks be to the almighty for his goodness [.] we have had some very cold weather here for the last weeks but we have some very good log huts here and that keeps the snow and rain out [.] as soon as the fine weather comes on we will commence marching[.] I like the battery very well[.] I have learned a good deal of the drill since I have been in the battery[.] sometimes we would have no drill for a week on account of the bad weather[.] our Captain is a fighting man so he intends to put us through the mill this summer[.] all of the men in the battery are good fighting men and I guess the[y] will show us a good example in battle [.] I guess that I will do my share of the fighting this summer.

I came out here with the intention of fighting and I mean to go through with it to the end if the lord will only spare my health [.] I think that we have a good commander Gen. Grant[.] he intends to put down this rebellion this coming campagin (sic)[.] doane is getting along very well [.] he seems to like the battery as well as all the rest so I should like to know if he is credited to the quota of Weston or to the quota of boston[.] I don't know as I have any more to say at present from your most obedient and obliging servant

George Crosby, 5th Mass Battery, Washington DC

[Editor's note: Crosby's next letter, dated May 11, 1864, describes the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House. This was the second major battle in General Ulysses S. Grant's 1864 campaign. Following the bloody but inconclusive Battle of the Wilderness, Grant's army moved southeast, attempting to lure General Robert E. Lee into battle under more favorable conditions. Elements of Lee's army beat the Union army to the critical crossroads of Spotsylvania Court House and began entrenching. Fighting occurred on and off from May 8 to May 21. In the end, the battle was tactically inconclusive, but with almost 32,000 casualties on both sides, it was the costliest battle of the campaign.]

May 11, 1864, Near Spotsylvania Court House, 45 miles from Richmond Va.

Friend Fiske,

I take the pleasure of writing you a few lines hoping to find you in good health as it leaves me at present [.] thank the lord for his 3rd of May. Now on the 4th day it has been hard fighting. We have lost in killed & wounded about 12,000 men including prisoners we have taken from the Rebels about 7,000 prisoners during the battle. It is a horrid sight to see the poor fellows that are brought off from the battle field some of them Blown all to atoms by the balls & shells. It is impossible to say how long the battle may last [.] the rebels say that Gen. Lee intends to fight until the last man is killed. But the [sic] can talk as they like for they have a hard man to whip that is Gen. Grant. We are in position about 1,800 yards from the Rebels. They have got the best of us for they are in the woods and we are in the plain. We have been Shelling them since yesterday. My Battery lost 3 men this morning by the Bursting of shell from the Rebels. This Battle is to be the hardest fought battle of the age. By the time this Battle is over there will be but very little left of the Army of the Potomac. There are 4 Army Corps fighting [.] about 120,000 men. The Rebels estimate their army about 90,000 men. The prisoners that we have taken are glad that they have been taken. The Rebels are very strongly fortified. They will not make an attack in Beginning of the day [.] but they will wait until night and if they gain a victory they can fortify at night.

I dont know as I have any more to say at present!

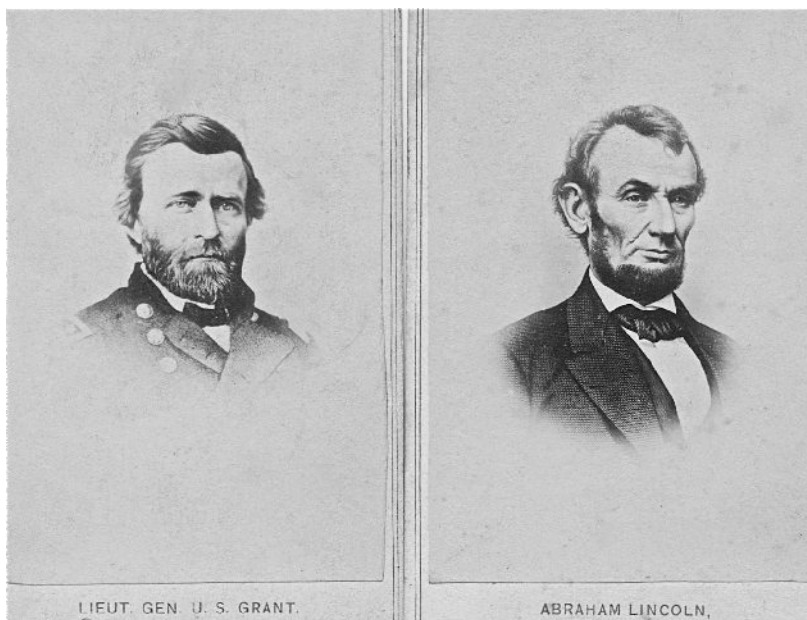
Yours most Obedient Servant, George Crosby

May 17, 1864, In position near Spotsylvania Court House, Va.

Friend Fiske,

I take the pleasure of writing to you a few lines hoping to find you in good health as it leaves me at present [,] thank the lord for his goodness. We have had A Battle since I wrote to you last. Today is the only day that we have had to rest since the Battle commenced. This is the 12th day of the Battle. We drove the Rebels on Sunday about 2 miles and captured 1 Battery & 700 prisoners. We are expecting the Rebels to attack us tonight. The Rebel pickets are deserting as fast as they put out. They say that they are getting short of provisions. We have the principal part of their supplies off. They cannot hold out very long for they have a large army to fight. I dont know as I have any more to say at present. From your most Obedient Servant

George Crosby
5th Mass. Battery, Washington D.C.



Carte de visites of Lieut. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant and President Abraham Lincoln. Cards with photographs of prominent persons became very popular during this period and were traded among friends. (Collection Weston Historical Society)

Samuel Patch to Alonzo Fiske, 1864-65

Samuel Patch, a married 25-year-old carpenter, enlisted in 1862 as a three-years man in Weston's first quota of 17. Patch was rapidly promoted from Private to non-commissioned officer; 2nd Sergeant, Color Sergeant, First Lieutenant and finally Captain.

Beginning in the summer of 1864, Patch was involved in a series of battles around Petersburg, Virginia, popularly known as the Siege of Petersburg. In this case, rather than a classic siege of a single city, the campaign involved nine months of trench warfare in which Union forces commanded by Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant assaulted Petersburg unsuccessfully and then constructed trench lines that eventually extended over 30 miles from the eastern outskirts of Richmond to the eastern and southern outskirts of Petersburg. Petersburg was crucial to the supply of Confederate General Robert E. Lee's army. Numerous raids were conducted and battles fought in attempts to cut off the railroad supply lines through Petersburg to Richmond. Many of these raids resulted in the lengthening of trench lines, overloading dwindling Confederate resources. Lee finally yielded to the overwhelming pressure and abandoned both cities in April 1865, leading to his retreat and surrender at Appomattox Court House. The Siege of Petersburg foreshadowed the trench warfare that was common in World War I, earning it a prominent position in military history.

In the letter below, Samuel Patch talks about the capture of Weldon Railroad. This battle was fought from August 18 - 24, 1864, as part of General Grant's fourth offensive during the Petersburg campaign. The Union victory resulted in the capture of one of General Robert E. Lee's most important supply lines.

Bleaks Station, Va Aug 30th 1864

Mr. Fiske,

Sir. Once more I will improve the oportunity (sic) of writing a few lines to you, although I do not expect I can tell you much news as you have undoubtedly seen better accounts in the papers of the transactions here than I am able to give. Since I returned to the Regiment we have had plenty to do, for some time the Regiment was detached from the Brigade as engeneers (sic) for the Division but is now releived (sic) from that duty and we are with the Brigade again.

I suppose you have learned before this time that Henry Tucker is missing; he has not been seen since the battle of the 19th. The last time any one in the company saw him was about half an hour before our Division was engaged.

Camp near White Station on Sept 25th 64

My Dear Sir

Thrs your favor of the 21st is at hand I am greatly indebted to you for having
 instructed me and giving me the information
 you did not have not yet procured much of my out
 fits and would gladly receive those things which you
 mentioned in your letter as a present from the Regt.
 If you wish to send them I think the best way would
 be to forward them by post. I will send you in
 reply a few specimens of several of the packages as contained
 wrapped in strong paper and wrapped being shipped
 only. If you desire the return of small objects the
 packages to be kept for you I should be glad to do so
 All things packages of that description will not be forwarded
 by mail if directed to a Commissioned officer.
 If you should wish to send them by express send them
 by Adams ordering to City Point in my name.
 If you prefer them direct sent to the Regt. but to
 City Point by order of the Regt. they might never
 reach it. You wished to know the date of my com-
 ing to the 21st I was not mustered as an
 officer until the 19th and took command of
 the Company on the 20th. Hoping to hear from
 you again I am your Obedt Servt

Samuel Patch
 1st Lieut. Comp'y 20th

1864 letter from Samuel Patch to Alonzo Fiske, written from the front lines. Note the neat handwriting despite wartime conditions. (Collection Weston Historical Society)

When the Regt. passed into the wood, Henry must have been behind and as we took a different direction I think he must of mistaken his way and got into the rebel lines before he was aware of it. A large portion of the enemys (sic) forces that were in that vicinity came around in our rear and picked up quite a number of stragglers from our Corps.

Henry has the advantage of us I think for he has probably got into Richmond and that is what we can't do very easy [,] at least the prospect is slim at present.

We have done one good thing, that is in capturing the Weldon Rail Road. We have got that sure and the rebs can't get it back again although they have made two or three desperate attempts to recapture the road and drive us from our position.

The last time we were attacked by the enemy was on the morning of the 21st the fight was not a long one but it was a hard one for the Johnes, they paid deer (sic) for their trouble and accomplished nothing. I went over the field a short time after the battle and it was astonishing to see what work our artillery made among them, the ground was completely strewn with the dead and wounded. We took quite a large number of prisoners and for once met with but small loss on our side. This has been a very long and hard campaign. It is hard to tell when it will end, and for my part I hope it will not end untill (sic) we accomplish the object for which we have fought so long and hard to gain.

I suppose that there will be some exciting times this fall as both the draft and election are to take place. I understand that you have succeeded (sic) in getting men so there will be no draft in Weston. I think Weston has been very fortunate during the whole war. I guess that the selectmen have been pretty active in performing their part of the work.

Everything is very quiet along the lines now and has been for several days with the exception of the regular morning and evening canonadeing(sic) in front of Petersburg. We are strengthening our lines every day, building Forts and Breastworks at all points, and by apperences (sic) I think it is intended that these lines should be held at all hazzards (sic).

I have heard it reported several times that Gen Burnside's was to have another command, if that is so I think we shall stand a good chance to have this department, for wherever he goes I think he will take the old 9th Corps with him. I am pretty sure that we cannot get into a much worse place than we have had since this campaign commenced.

We are having very pleasant weather here now and are enjoying ourselves as well as could be expected under the existing circumstances. Our work is not as hard just now as it has been for some time past. I miss Henry very much for we were together most of our leisure time. Henry was a good soldier and never failed to do his duty, he did not ask any man to take his place nor do his work.

Daniel Williams and Charles are both here now. They are engaged in the sutler business [an army camp follower who supplies provisions to soldiers] and I guess are doing pretty well. It is very plesant (sic) to have our old schoolmates so near, and I enjoy it much. I pass a good portion of my leisure time with the boys and it makes it appear not like home but next to it. Well as it is almost dark I will close for the night and finish some other time.

Thursday September 1st, 64 [SAME LETTER]

I will try now and finish my letter as I have a little leasure (sic) time. Everything remains quiet in front of our corps and yesterday we advanced our outer picket line about one hundred yards without any opersition (sic). Scouts have been out near a mile in front of us and found the rebel pickets posted on the Railroad. Our line is as far advanced at this point as they intend to have it at present, unless there is a move made at some other place. We have to turn out at daybreak every morning now and man the works, as they some (sic) expect an attack here, but I pity the grey back that ever attempts to cross the field in front of our works, for it would be sure death to him.

When you see Father tell him I am well and shall write to him again soon. I think I have made out a pretty long letter this time, although it is not a very

interesting one, perhaps the next may be better. Hoping (sic) this may find you enjoying the blessing of health I remain yours,

Sergt Sam

In 1864, the Town of Weston sent Patch an entire set of officer's equipment including a sword, sash, and belt, as an expression of their favor. The delivery of this gift, and Patch's appreciative response, are printed below.

Letter from C.H. Williams to Alonzo Fiske, Oct 24, 1864, from near Poplar Grove Church

Dear Sir

After receiving your favor, I sent to Washington and have delivered to L. Patch the Package containing Sword Belt &c It would have thrice paid you, could you have seen his countenance light up with joy to know his friends at home remembered him so kindly. He is a brave fellow, and a smart officer beloved by all in the regiment. . . [C.H. Williams]

Camp 35th Mass Vol Infty
Before Petersburg VA Dec 29th/64

Gentlemen,

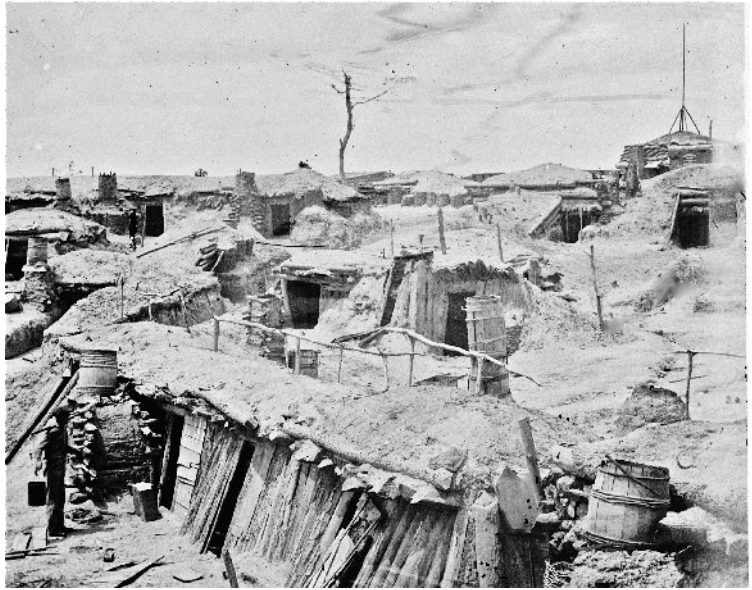
I hasten to improve this opportunity and acknowledge (sic) the receipt (sic) of the valuable present, which you have presented me. It was indeed a great surprise to me and I know not in what way to reply. In fact it is beyond my power to find words by which to express my feelings.

I can only say that you who have presented me with this substantial (sic) mark of your regard have my most earnest and sincere thanks. . . .

Gentlemen, the sword which you have presented me I prize above all, and if it should be my fortune to return to my home and friends, it shall ever be preserved in remembrance of those who so kindly gave it. Let me assure you my friends, that sword shall never be sheathed with dishonor: but whenever drawn while acting in the defense of our country's rights, it shall remind me of my home, and its loved associates, and give me new courage and strength to more faithfully perform the duties before me. . . .

Written to the citizens of Weston by Samuel Patch, first lieutenant Co C, 35th Mass Vol

View of the trenches at Fort Sedgwick, also known as Fort Hell because of the constant gunfire from rebel lines.



The growing Union siege lines were remarkable for the diversity of forts constructed along them. By the spring of 1865, Federal engineers had built 31 forts at Petersburg. Radiating from the forts, in a seemingly aimless pattern, were the breastworks. Samuel Patch wrote from Fort Sedgwick, which was notable because its close proximity to Confederate batteries made it a prominent target. It became known as Fort Hell because it was subjected to constant shelling. Scarcely a day passed without witnessing a heavy artillery duel, as the two armies lay opposite to each other. Patch's letter tells of Union and Confederate soldiers exchanging papers or trading between the lines during the day, out of sight of their officers. Shelling would begin again at nightfall.

Fort Sedgwick Va March 21 1865

Mr. Fiske,

It is some time since I have written to you, and I believe I promised to write and let you know how we were getting along and how we were situated. We are now in Fort Sedgwick, generally called Fort Hell and I think it comes about as near that as anything on earth could for if the other place is any hotter (sic) than it was here for about two hours this afternoon, I for one don't care about going there. I believe I never saw mortar shells piled into one place any faster than the rebs put them into this Fort this afternoon.

We have been in the Fort about a fortnight, there is one mor (sic) regiment besides ours here. Our principle duty now is picket duty, and guard duty in the Fort. The whole garrison consists of two Regiments and two Batterys only. The position of the picket line that we occupy is not over three or four hundred yards from the Fort and directly in front of it, the picket line of the enemy in our front is not over seventy-five yards from our line. So near that the men can talk with each other easy. They very often meet between the lines and exchange papers or trade for tobacco and other things. There is no picket fireing (sic) here in the daytime but just as soon as it becomes dark they commence to pelt away at each other, and keep it up until day light, then the first thing you would see would be our boys and the rebs trying to get a chance to exchange papers or trade without the officers seeing it. The rebel officers will not allow the men to have any talk together if they can prevent it but they can't see all that is going on. We very often have circulars given to us when on picket, to send into the rebel line in any way that we can, the last time I was out I sent several into their lines, and as I have some now I will enclose a copy although I presume you have seen the same order in the papers. I wish you could of come out to the army this winter for a visit—I think you would have been well paid for your trouble, for there is no place where a man can form so correct an idea of what war is as before Petersburg. You would be supprised (sic) to view the country for miles and miles around here.

I do not think that the hard fighting will be altogether in this section in the coming campaign, in fact, it is no use for us to undertake to carry the works in our front; neither can the enemy brake (sic) our line, it would be nothing but slaughter to undertake anything of the kind. Don't you think that things begin to look a little more favourable (sic) for a close of the war? I do think that the thing will play out in less than one year more, and it looks to me as though this summer would wind up the fighting part of it. They might just as well cave in first as last for they have got to come to it sooner or later. Hoping (sic) to hear from you soon. I am very Respectfully, S. Patch

If you are interested in further reading about the Civil War experiences of soldiers, in this case from Sudbury, serving in the 35th Massachusetts and other regiments, check out *From Your Loving Son" Civil War Correspondence and Diaries of Private George F. Moore and His Family*, by Mary Ellen Hoover, Elin Williams Neiterman, and E. Dianne James, available from the Sudbury Historical Society, www.sudbury01776.