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# The Westfield Home Front During the Civil War

Madeline Warner

The military aspects of the Civil War fill thousands of volumes, from slim personal reminiscences to massively detailed regimental histories; but the way life continued at home in areas geographically remote from the battlefields has been virtually unexplored. A study of contemporary newspapers featuring the events in Westfield, Massachusetts, during the Civil War period provides a quiet counterpoint to the more well-known military activity and reveals the balance struck between local and national events for most townspeople.

The 1860 census revealed Westfield as a village of 1060 families and 5056 people.<sup>1</sup> Predominantly agricultural in its outlying areas, the population and industry were centered in the Elm, Broad, Main, and Court Streets areas. Whip manufacturing was the principal industry, with cigar making and paper mills also prominent in the village's economy.<sup>2</sup>

A recent historian has concluded that "Westfield was hardly a hotbed of anti-slavery sentiment,"<sup>3</sup> and contemporary sources reveal no organized abolitionist movement in the town. Local ministers preached abolition as a moral issue, but for the most part slavery was represented as a distant evil. Reports exist of a Methodist minister who was hounded from his pulpit by an influential copperhead for espousing abolition too vigorously. However, when the replacement proved dull and weak despite his piety, the original minister was sought out by the copperhead and urged to "Come back and preach nigger every Sunday."<sup>4</sup>

In January of 1859 the opposition of Stephen Douglas to "the ill-judged Missouri Compromise" was praised locally and it was stated that since Douglas's election "the executive does not so often bring into requisition the guillotine for those who dare to think and speak encouragingly of States Rights and popular sovereignty."<sup>5</sup>

While editorials might proclaim the equality of all men, the vignettes and anecdotes scattered across the front pages of prewar newspapers cast the Negro as a credulous or foolish "darkie". The more vicious of these brief tales and fillers, however, were directed at the "sons of the Emerald Isle." The *Westfield News Letter* was a staunch upholder of the temperance movement and most of the complaints voiced against the Irish immigrants regarded their excessive consumption of the "poor gin" of Springfield.<sup>6</sup>

Further evidence that abolition was not an all-consuming crusade was shown when the Independence, Iowa, *Civilian* was quoted as stating that Massachusetts and Iowa both have an intense love for Negroes and a cordial hatred for all southerners, and the Westfield editor angrily refuted this claim, saying:

...there might be 100 men in Massachusetts with Garrison in their heads who would abolish slavery immediately...the masses are opposed only to slavery extension...They do not *hate* but pity those who are cursed with slavery.”<sup>7</sup>

Speculation occasionally surfaced briefly with editorials regarding the restiveness of Southern states, but not until the raid on Harper’s Ferry did it become a recurrent theme. John Brown was hailed by editor and letter writers alike as a martyr to the cause of freedom. Evidence was offered to show that Brown was ten miles away at the time of the Doyle murders in Kansas, and those slave owners who caused the death of Brown’s son were blamed for causing a “temporary derangement” which drove him to his acts at Harper’s Ferry.<sup>8</sup> Brown’s trial was followed in news dispatches, and his execution was considered a grave error. Governor Henry Wise of Virginia was labeled the modern day equivalent of Nero and Caligula for not commuting the sentence,<sup>9</sup> and called a “scheming political duelist . . . a rabid proslavery southron (sic)” for allowing the martyr Brown to go to an undeserved death.<sup>10</sup>

Apparently public opinion in Westfield was not quite so unanimous about Brown’s martyrdom, as letters to the newspaper attested that church bells pealed and cannons were fired on the day of his execution. The pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church was quoted as saying that most hearts beat but one way, except for a few who celebrated joyfully. Dr. Chapin’s remarks were followed by the acid reflection that he would no doubt say that “to exculpate his friends of the Methodist church and the Democratic party at whose door the sin has been laid.”<sup>11</sup>

More parochial matters filled subsequent issues of the *Westfield News Letter* until the early summer of 1860 when the national presidential campaign began. Although P. L. Buell, editor of the *News Letter*, had favored William Seward, the paper greeted the nomination of Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin with an enthusiasm shared by local Republicans and manifested by a ratification party at which local politicians expressed their satisfaction with the convention’s choice. Scheduled to be held in Whitman Hall, it overflowed onto the Green where revelers listened to speeches from the balcony of the Woronoco Hotel before forming a torchlight parade to the home of E. B. Gillett, which was decorated with the names of Lincoln and Hamlin in golden light.<sup>12</sup> The Noble and Cooley Drum Company of Granville manufactured an ornately decorated and silver trimmed drum from white oak rails declared to be from a lot of 3000

Abraham Lincoln had split thirty years before. This Lincoln drum was displayed in the newly established Republican club rooms.<sup>13</sup>



WORONOCO HOTEL, from *Westfield's Quarter Millennial Anniversary Program* (1919).

The Democratic party was compared metaphorically to a majestic oak which had withstood all external attempts to destroy it, but having finally split, one half to the north and the other to the south, it was a victim of internal decay. It was stated that most Democrats were loyal to John C. Breckenridge, and the Breckenridge-Lane flag was the first to fly in Westfield after a rally was held on the Green at which Reuben Noble, postmaster, (and later donor of Noble Hospital) spoke most convincingly. Some "naughty Republicans disrupted it with three cheers for Abraham Lincoln."<sup>14</sup> A Breckenridge club was formed and by September had a roster of 170 members.<sup>15</sup>

The Bell-Everett party formed a Union Club with a beginning membership of 60 men.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the summer much interest was expressed in the unexpected success of this Union party claiming to represent freedom in its struggle against despotism.<sup>17</sup> The members of the local Union Club ordered a flag from Boston to bear the names of their candidates only to discover that they had been sent a Lincoln-Hamlin banner in its stead: "the best and most sensible joke of the campaign"<sup>18</sup> in the opinion of the *News Letter*, which shared the fear of Charles Sumner that the Bell-Everett ticket

would undermine Republican strength at the same time that it pledged enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law to gain Southern support.<sup>19</sup> Bell-Everett meetings were fully reported, and some annoyed letters showed the club members' dissatisfaction with their portrayal in the *Springfield Republican* as "old fogies"; the *Westfield News Letter* promised to point out that the majority were young and active.<sup>20</sup>

Parenthetically it is to be noted that the *Westfield News Letter* made frequent slighting references to both the "infant" city of Springfield and more particularly the *Springfield Republican*. Although both were at least nominally abolitionist papers and each enthusiastically embraced Lincoln and the Republican party, they parted company over the temperance question. As the Westfield paper noted: "Mississippi is the only state and Utah the only territory having no subscribers to the *Republican*. Slavery and polygamy do not need a licentious press to make the people wicked."<sup>21</sup>

Stephen Douglas was the only candidate to visit Westfield, making a seven-minute stop as his campaign train moved through New England. A recent enthusiasm fervently advocated by the *News Letter* was the science of phrenology, and the reporter stated that Douglas's "phrenological development showed strong passions and powerful intellect . . . a Little Giant but not so Great a Giant as Daniel Webster."<sup>22</sup> Another view of Douglas was presented when the *Greenfield Democrat* was quoted as stating that early in his life Douglas "began to imbibe the real spirit of New England." The *Palmer Journal* was praised for retorting "well he might, for it cost him only 28 cents a gallon."<sup>23</sup>

By October 10, 1860 the *Westfield News Letter* had added Lincoln and Hamlin to the masthead, and the editor's certainty about the result of the election showed in the announcement that the next issue, scheduled for the day after Election Day, would be held up to announce the foreseen election of Lincoln.<sup>24</sup> Lincoln did carry Westfield with 520 votes, but earlier predictions of the order of the other contenders were in error. Douglas followed with 304 votes, Breckenridge with 116, and Bell trailed with only 38 votes. The Republicans celebrated with an oyster supper for 300 people; at its beginning it was interrupted by a fire at the machine works, but it soon resumed "as merry as a marriage bell until 11 o'clock."<sup>25</sup>

Local issues again took center stage with a hotly contested race for a postmaster to succeed Reuben Noble, a Democrat. The new postmaster was to be chosen by a republican caucus after much acrimony.<sup>26</sup>

Editorially it was assumed that the secession of South Carolina could be handled peacefully; Lincoln was not expected to compel South Carolina and her sister states to remain in the Union by force, and it was announced with relief that the "Kansas (sic) troubles were over."<sup>27</sup>

At the beginning of the new year political interest was shown by the debate topics in the local Lyceums. The East Granville Lyceum decided that "the North has given the South just cause for secession"<sup>28</sup> and the Westfield group determined that the people of the United States would have cause to regret the election of Lincoln.<sup>29</sup>

January 4, 1861, was declared a Fast Day by President Buchanan, and the Reverend D. E. Chapin's Fast Day sermon urged his congregation not to defer to another generation the bloodshed which would be necessary to solve the slavery question.<sup>30</sup>

The Washington correspondent, "Sojourner", wrote with a measure of surprise that Breckenridge had declared himself an "out and out disunionist."<sup>31</sup>

These expressions of national concern were seen almost wholly in the editorial columns. Local events centered on church and Normal School activities, and letter writers conducted an exchange of opinions as to whether the physical and spiritual health of young shop clerks was affected adversely or beneficially by having to work from 6 A.M. to 10 or 11 P.M.<sup>32</sup> An advertisement in the April 10, 1861, issue showed the underlying concern about war. It urged people to go to the Westfield Gallery for a "good and durable likeness before the Union is smashed and we are all knocked into a cocked hat. God protect those who do not procure a likeness."<sup>33</sup>

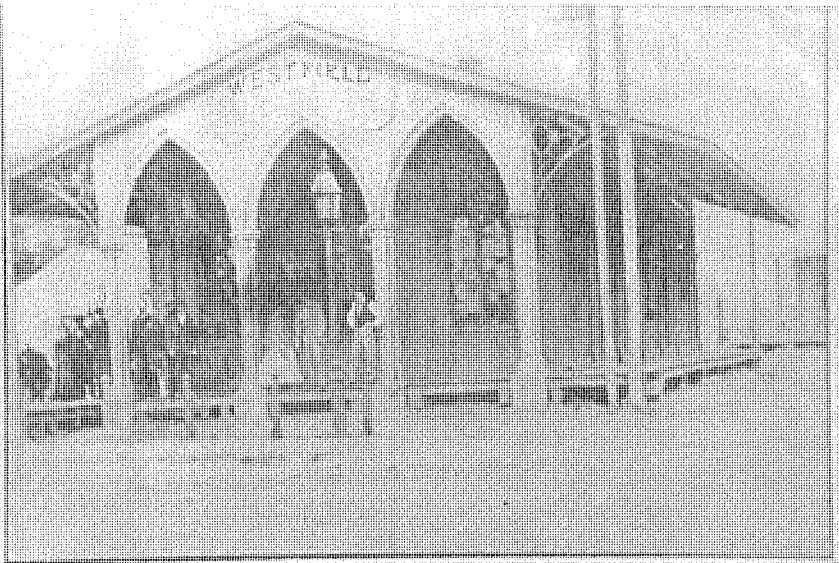
The firing on Fort Sumter brought an end to the period of complacency which had marked the months before. "War, grim visaged war with all its attendant horrors, seems inevitable" headed the column of telegraphic reports from General Beauregard to L. P. Walker, the Confederate Secretary of War, carrying the proviso that all reports came "through emissaries of the Southern press" and were consequently of dubious validity.<sup>34</sup>

In the ensuing weeks war fever reached a peak not to be equalled again. The Town Hall was crowded for a war meeting on April 20, 1861, at which 46 men were recruited by three officers. A town meeting was scheduled for the following week at which \$5,000 was voted for the equipping of a volunteer company and to care for the dependent families of the soldiers.<sup>35</sup> The firm of Snow and Thayer offered to continue the salaries of any employees who volunteer. Thomas Kneil was interrupted with prolonged cheers as he urged every man to send "those traitorous rebels back to their native hell." His political rival in the 1860 campaign, former Postmaster Reuben Noble, leader of the Breckenridge forces, called for an end to partisanship and expressed the feelings of many when he said: "I do not propose to go unless absolutely necessary, but I am willing to help sustain those who do go." Major L. B. Walkley, who had served as a sergeant in the Florida war, agreed to go as commander of the volunteer company if he were really needed.<sup>36</sup>

After the meeting recruiting continued, but at a slower pace. A letter from "Electa" asking if Westfield men were holding out for more money or for an officer's commission,<sup>37</sup> and "Joshua" answered with an explanation of the difficulties present in equipping eighty men and suggesting that she sew for the men because "needles at the present is (sic) much more valuable than the pen."<sup>38</sup>

The first group of volunteers began daily drill while waiting assignment. *The Springfield Republican* commented on the delay: "The glory with which the Old Bay State is covered by her response is dimmed by her red tape slowness now."<sup>39</sup> A party of 79 volunteers from Great Barrington marched through Westfield en route to Springfield and were escorted by Col. Asa Barr and fifty horsemen from the Four Mile House to town.<sup>40</sup> A week later the Westfield men marched to Springfield accompanied by Col. Barr and 150 mounted men of the Rough and Ready Engine Company. There they were to be sworn in and the elected officers were to receive their commissions. A letter from Governor Andrews, rejecting the choice of Pliny Wood for first lieutenant, caused much dismay and 25 men refused to take the oath and were put in the Hampden Park guard house.<sup>41</sup> Wood's supporters met in Westfield and Governor Andrew's nominee, Andrew Campbell, declined the appointment. A compromise candidate, David Chase, was chosen after a representative from the governor explained that unlike the militia, volunteer companies did not have the right to elect their officers. The men were released from the guard house, and the company was sworn in as Company K of the Tenth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.<sup>42</sup> After the ceremony the company returned to Westfield for a collation at the home of Col. Walkley where the men were given Bibles from the Central Baptist Church and pins of the Stars and Stripes from C. L. Ingersoll.<sup>43</sup> Former employees of the Hampden Cigar Company were given \$55 from their employers and \$52 from the remaining employees.

Another recruiting drive began in September of 1861, and the Westfield company was completed by September 15 with 60 men reporting to Camp Reed at the Springfield Armory where they were accepted as Company F of the Twenty-Seventh Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry under the command of Lucius Thayer with Pliny Wood as first lieutenant.<sup>44</sup> The railroads to Springfield from neighboring towns offered special excursion rates to bring people to the Boston and Albany depot to see the Twenty-Seventh off.<sup>45</sup>



THE BOSTON AND ALBANY STATION

Flag raisings were a common response to the war news in the early weeks. The Hampden Cigar Company erected the First liberty pole to fly the flag,<sup>46</sup> and a public subscription at the L. B. Blood store was held to purchase a flag. Its raising was a public celebration at which G. W. Ives spoke, stating he had been nurtured and reared a Democrat but had now forgotten all allegiance to party lines.<sup>47</sup> Another flag raising was marked by controversy. Mr. Vose, a resident "over the Great River", raised a flag to replace one cut down and burned by Lester Holcomb. At the raising Holcomb owned up to the burning, saying he had raised it for Breckenridge, but one his secessionist proclivities were known he cut down the post and burned the flag.<sup>48</sup> The following week it was announced that the new flag was paid for by Vose and his tenants, not Holcomb as the news reports had implied.<sup>49</sup>

Bonfires were also a frequent expression of patriotic sentiment but nonetheless constituted a safety hazard, and warnings were published of fines to be levied for unauthorized fires.<sup>50</sup> Subsequent to that warning it was stated that "a respectable prominent citizen will pay fines of those convicted of bonfires in demonstration of their patriotic love of the Union."<sup>51</sup> Bonfires sporadically reappeared, especially after optimistic war news, and an effigy of Jefferson Davis dangled for several days from the roof of the Exchange Building before it was removed.<sup>52</sup>



To provide information about the South and to whet Northern patriotism, letters from the South were frequently printed. In the earliest stages of the war a particularly dramatic example of the fraternal nature of the conflict was a letter written to a Westfield woman from her brother, a resident of Kentucky. A pro-slavery apologist, he viewed the war as an aggressive action of Northern businessmen who would exterminate the South to keep it in the Union. "Old Abe is trampling the Constitution under his feet . . . he has bought Kentucky." The writer vowed to fight for the South: "May my right hand be palsied and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth if I desert her."<sup>53</sup> The J. L. Shepard & Bros. Whip Company received notice from a firm in Charleston refusing to pay for whips they had ordered unless the North withdrew from the war: "your friend in Peace, in war an enemy."<sup>54</sup> The murder of a former Westfield native, 62-year-old Sirlanctet Karner, in his Virginia home by rebel soldiers was reported by a relative.<sup>55</sup> A Tennessee newspaper's description of Northern soldiers as "the offal of the spinning jenny and the almshouse, and street scavengers and jail birds and others, who must enlist or starve" was reprinted as was a letter from Alabama "beseeching for you the hottest corner of the hottest department of hell."<sup>56</sup> These communications reinforced the contention of the *News Letter* that Southerners were semi-barbarous, "raised and nurtured under the code of the duelist," who, like the Pharaoh in the time of Moses, were determined to "perish in the Red Sea of their own peculiar institution."<sup>57</sup> There was much speculation about slave insurrections and many rumors of slave-set fires in Southern cities were printed,<sup>58</sup> as were frequent reports of the death of Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee.<sup>59</sup>

Once the Westfield troops were in the field, they were faithful correspondents to their local newspaper. Scarcely a week passed without the appearance of a letter from men of the Tenth or Twenty-Seventh Massachusetts regiments. They provided the people of Westfield a view of the South that was hardly reassuring, although such letters that were printed uniformly praised their leaders and the Union cause. G. W. Ives, stationed in Newbern, North Carolina, decried the lack of civilization and refinement and states that he knew of not "a single case of intelligence within twenty miles." Southern women were demoralized, "they both smoke tobacco, and if you believe me, chew snuff."<sup>60</sup> Homer Wheeler wrote to deny rumors that he was to be shot for sleeping while on sentinel duty.<sup>61</sup> Col. L. B. Walkley, of the Tenth wrote from Camp Brightwood, near Washington, D.C., to report that one member of his company had deserted and that one (John Littlefield) had died of illness. From the same camp "E" wrote to thank the Soldiers' Aid Society for the barrels sent for Thanksgiving. The contents were parceled out evenly, with private boxes going to each soldier designated, and the coverlets and comfortables distributed by lottery.<sup>62</sup>

This was just the first of many shipments sent to the soldiers throughout the war. A Soldiers' Aid Society was formed soon after the first

men left for camp. Meetings were held weekly at various churches to sew and knit for the soldiers. Barrels and boxes were sent as soon as filled, and the lists of contents ranged from such necessities as blankets, sheets, shirts, and stockings in the earliest packages, and as the war dragged on, homemade wine, jelly, pickles, and such popular games as "Dr. Kane's Trip to the Arctic" and "The Topsy Philosopher."<sup>63</sup> The Soldiers' Aid Society also sent packages and money to over 1800 former slaves who had sought sanctuary at fortress Monroe.<sup>64</sup>

Fund raising festivals were held to benefit both soldiers and their families. A strawberry festival on the Fourth of July became an annual event after over 700 people attended the first one in 1862 to raise \$204.73. Others aided soldiers; Dr. George Tucker offered free medical care to families whose sons or fathers had entered the armed services,<sup>65</sup> and the Adams Express Company agreed to forward all letters from Massachusetts soldiers without charge.<sup>66</sup> A special town meeting was called to vote for an appropriation with which to support families of volunteers during their absence.<sup>67</sup>

The war brought increased taxation and the papers printed the tax status of the leading businesses in town. In 1862 the Hampden Cigar Company, employing 120 men with a \$1000 weekly payroll, was the largest taxpayer.<sup>68</sup> The entire cigar industry in Westfield employed 300 people.<sup>69</sup> I. N. Weston, manufacturer of army coats, employed thirty men each earning fifty cents a day. The demand for whips had increased with the beginning of the war. The American Whip Company made an elaborately decorated ivory handled whip trimmed in engraved gold and silver to present to President Lincoln.<sup>70</sup> C. W. Spencer opened a twenty man shop making artillery whips and sword knots for the cavalry.<sup>71</sup> Although prices were rising, there was full employment filling military needs.



WHIP FACTORY, from *Westfield's Quarter Millennial Anniversary Program* (1919).

The change to an almost wholly paper currency created a very favorable situation for counterfeiters. *Peterson's Counterfeit Detector* was published monthly, and excerpts were printed in the *News Letter* on a weekly basis, alerting its readers to the currently circulating counterfeit bills. It was a very real and widespread problem for the extent of the war, and much vigilance was urged, especially at large public fairs and the like when the passers of illegal bills would be operating.

Advertisements in the *News Letter* reflected wartime concerns, carrying such headings as: "The Star Spangled Banner Still Waves," "One fort retaken," "Remember your friends in the Army", "We accept anything Uncle Sam recognizes as legal tender."<sup>71</sup>

Public sentiment began to change as the war dragged on with no end in sight. The war news was brought by telegraph and carried in the "news of the War" column, and the Washington correspondent, "Sojourner," kept readers abreast of political events. The gubernatorial election of 1862 marked the beginning of a change in attitude. Westfield cast 357 votes for Charles Devens, the candidate of the combined Peoples and Democratic party and 283 votes for Governor Andrews, the Republican incumbent who was reelected notwithstanding.<sup>72</sup> Interest in the Soldiers' Aid Society had waned, and young women were urged to take part in the sewing done by the group while remaining at home because "a trip to Hartford is expensive and the morals of the city questionable."<sup>73</sup>

The *News Letter* discontinued its day-by-day report on the war's progress because of a lack of military action. This decision was aided, no doubt, by the soaring cost of paper which forced a reduction in the size of the newspaper.<sup>74</sup> A measure of disillusionment crept into the editorial attitude toward the military; a rise in intemperance was noted, and a young soldier's enticement by "a strange woman whose house is on the way to hell" into Session's brothel in Springfield which cost the young man "\$500 and his character" was cited as another example of moral decay.<sup>75</sup> Another example of disillusionment was seen in the report that a local jeweler had received a number of orders for Copperhead pins.<sup>76</sup> In early 1863 local concerns centered on matters closer to home. Dr. Colton, a traveling lecturer demonstrating the relaxing properties of laughing gas, was the principal item in the local news column for several weeks. By popular demand the demonstration was repeated to audiences segregated by sex so that the ladies might not be offended at the antics of men freed from social restraints by the gas. Within a week it was reported that many prominent wealthy families had ordered canisters of nitrous oxide and leather breathing bags to enjoy in the privacy of their homes.<sup>77</sup>

The draft did little to restore the earlier enthusiasm and was regarded as a deterrent to patriotism. Although no outward defiance was noted, an undercurrent of resentment was evident. In response to the first call, P. H. Boise began to compile a list of all men of military age; this list to be divided into the first and second classes. The second class consisted of married men between the ages of 35 and 45, while the first class consisted of all other eligible men who would be first to be drafted.<sup>78</sup> The entire list totalled 988 names divided between 659 in the first and 329 in the second class. Among these were 23 cripples, 2 deaf-mutes, and one "crazy" man.<sup>79</sup> The official draft took place in Springfield, where 145 names were drawn to fill Westfield's quota; among them were Rev. M. X. Carroll, pastor of the Roman Catholic church; the Hon. M. B. Whitney, a state senator and trial justice; and J. B. Holland, the principal of the high school.<sup>80</sup>

After the names of those drafted were announced, it was revealed that many foresighted eligible young men had formed private insurance companies to provide the necessary \$300 for a commutation. In one group of six only one name was drawn, so each man had only to contribute \$50 toward Seymour Sackett's commutation, while members of another group were assessed \$200 each because of the many drafted from its membership. Two local musicians enlisted in the band the day before the draft, only to discover that their names had not been drawn.<sup>81</sup>

It was possible to secure an exemption by proving physical disability or that one was the sole support of dependent parents, and forms for exemptions were regularly printed. It was noted that "young men who have neglected their mothers for years have suddenly set about earning something so as to claim exemption as the sole support of a dependent maternal." Of the 145 drafted, 101 were exempt, 2 were dead, one was not a Westfield resident for the required five years, 6 enlisted after the draft, eight or ten commuted, four "skeddaddled", and 21 men remained to serve. "We trust they will be as valuable to the government as it has cost to get them" stated the *News Letter*.<sup>82</sup>

The small return for so much time and effort served only to support the contention that a volunteer system was more effective and more equitable, and larger bounties were urged to stimulate volunteers.<sup>83</sup> In October of 1863, Abraham Lincoln called for an additional 300,000 troops to be drafted if that number did not volunteer by January 5, 1864. The Massachusetts

legislature had restricted towns from raising their bounties to attract volunteers. This ban was lifted and \$2,000 was raised for volunteers to fill the new quota of 72 men. By the sixteenth of December 25 men had volunteered and 9 had reenlisted from the Twenty-Seventh Regiment, leaving 38 places unfilled in the quota. The second draft took place in May of 1864, with considerable ill feeling. Twice as many names as necessary were drawn in hopes of eliminating the need for another draft.<sup>84</sup> Because the Provost Marshal had refused to accept certification of disability from doctors in the same town as the home of the draftee, Westfield arranged for a physician from a neighboring town to provide free physicals.<sup>85</sup> The inefficiency of the draft system was again highlighted when such men as John Atwater, a cripple who had not walked in years and who moved around town in a handpropelled carriage, were drawn.<sup>86</sup> Before the second draft could be enforced, forty men volunteered to serve for 100 days reinforcing the barricades around Washington.<sup>87</sup> Thus, the quota was filled before a third draft was announced setting a new quota of 120 men.<sup>88</sup> This draft was delayed in order to give proper credit to towns for volunteers, substitutes, and commutations.<sup>89</sup> In the meantime, a war committee was formed with pledged subscriptions to provide commutation money for draftees. Its treasurer, Henry Fuller, reminded subscribers to keep up their pledges so that proper payment could be made to military authorities.<sup>90</sup> By February 15, 1865, the date of the final draft, Westfield's quota had been filled. The town had learned since the first draft how to work within the system while avoiding great upheavals.

The election of 1864 did not arouse such public activity as did the 1860 election. "Rally round the flag, boys!" headed an advertisement for a large public rally for "McClellan and Liberty," at which Reuben Noble and Henry Fuller spoke.<sup>91</sup> This was the only significant reported activity of the Democratic party in Westfield during the campaign. The *News Letter* took a hard line against McClellan. Although the editor recognized McClellan's contributions as a general, he could have no confidence in a man who kept company with such traitors as Pendleton and Vallandigham and who agreed to run on their "satanic" platform.<sup>92</sup> Fears were expressed that the Irish as well as "ignorant foreigners and the degraded outcasts of New York City" would be led by unscrupulous political workers to cast their vote for McClellan.<sup>93</sup> Westfield cast 573 votes for Lincoln and 398 for McClellan, an excellent choice from the phrenological standpoint, since an analysis of the Little General's head revealed it was not developed in leadership ability.<sup>94</sup>

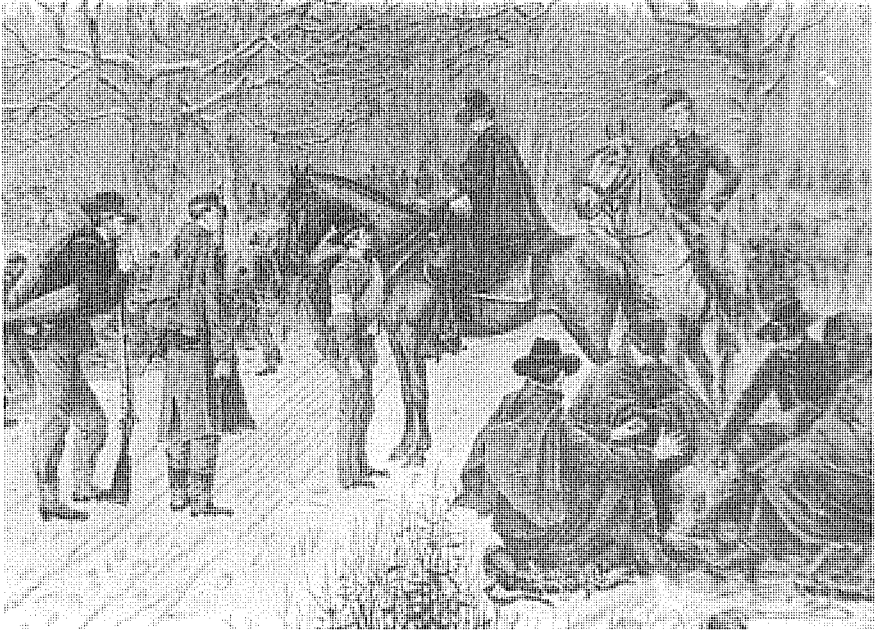
In 1864 Westfield lost two men in the Battle of the Wilderness, three at Shenandoah, three had died of wounds in the hospitals (including Pliny Wood, the center of the controversy in the forming of Westfield's first volunteer company), and several more had died of illness.<sup>95</sup>



BATTLE SCENE, from *Century War Book* (New York, 1894).

April of 1865 saw a variety of emotions. News of the surrender of General Lee was greeted with great jubilation. "The Democrats seemed joyous and at noon the Democratic cannon was fired in connection with the one owned by the Republicans."<sup>96</sup> Two days later Lincoln's assassination cast a pall of gloom over the town. Business establishments were draped in mourning and "men were seen walking the streets, seemingly insensible to external objects." Stores were closed on the afternoon of his death, and the church bells sounded.<sup>97</sup> For the following month, the *News Letter* enclosed the second page of each issue in the black borders of mourning, and speculation was voiced about a connection between John Wilkes Booth and the leaders of the Confederacy. "Southern chivalry hung Union women in Eastern Tennessee, shot our wounded soldiers in ambulances, starved them in prison, and assassinated President Lincoln."<sup>98</sup> The progress of the funeral train was followed, and all the local churches abandoned their sectarian differences in a united funeral service for the President at the First Congregational Church.<sup>99</sup>

Spirits were raised with Union victories ending the war, and bells of the Congregational and Methodist churches rang joyfully. A local correspondent, noticing the absence of the bell from the Baptist church, offered the suggestion that the "copper" in the Baptist bell kept it from sharing the general joy.<sup>100</sup>



TROOPS IN CAMP, from *Century War Book* (New York, 1894).

The Emancipation Proclamation received little public attention while the war was in progress, but the passing of the 13th Amendment in 1865 aroused much interest. The bells of the town rang in February when the House passed the amendment, and its progress through the stages of ratification by the states was followed closely.<sup>101</sup> While the immorality of slavery was being deplored, a classified advertisement in the *News Letter* offered a reward for the return of a fourteen year old indentured servant who had been taken into service from the State Alms House in Monson by a local farmer. It was considered a grave act of ingratitude for the boy to have run away while he had six more years of his indenture to serve.<sup>102</sup>

In the later stages of the war the economy showed the effect of the great amount of paper money in circulation. The price of flour went from \$9 a barrel in 1862 to \$14 in 1865, and the prices of other provisions rose accordingly, causing boarding houses to raise their charge by fifty cents a week. Increased taxation on cigars caused temporary closings in the local industry. In July of 1864, Whitney and Lane, with a weekly payroll of \$1,000, closed its doors.<sup>103</sup> Recycling of newspapers was urged as a means to keep the price of paper within reason, and housewives were urged to profit from the examples of the slaves who had grown strong on a diet based on cornmeal. Boycotts of such luxuries as meat, coffee, tea, spices, and spirits were suggested to conserve money through the winter.<sup>104</sup>

The end of the war did not have the devastating effect on the Westfield economy as it did in Springfield. By May of 1865 2000 men had been discharged from the Springfield Armory. The *News Letter* sympathized with the newly unemployed and urged that only loyal Republicans who had supported Lincoln should retain their jobs.<sup>105</sup>

By the end of 1865 prices had stabilized, but at a high level, and there was great pressure to withdraw all paper money so that those who had speculated in commodities might fail with the return to specie payment.<sup>106</sup>

Once peace was announced, a town meeting voted to appropriate \$20,000 to refund to those who had contributed money to encourage volunteering.<sup>107</sup> Another meeting was held in September of 1865, to arrange for the repayment from this appropriation and to adjust bounties still due to men who had been drafted or had volunteered to fill quotas after the drafts had been announced.<sup>108</sup> Repayment was still an issue in 1866 when it took a long series of warrants for a town meeting to procure extra compensation for men who had served in 1861 and 1862 before the large bounties were being given.<sup>109</sup> At this same meeting a group of resolutions were sent to Congress supporting the readmission of the former Confederate states to the union.<sup>110</sup>

The Soldiers' Aid Society became slowly less active and disbanded as soon as peace was proclaimed. One of its most elaborate and successful fund-raising projects was a New Year's Festival in 1864 which attracted an overflow crowd and earned over \$1,500, not without annoying such patrons as "Yeoman", who wrote that he could not see the tableaux because of the crowd and felt that he had been "jemmy-diddled out of his money."<sup>111</sup>

In the closing months of the war the Freedman's Aid Society attracted up to forty women a week, gathering at various churches to sew for the homeless slaves. Clothes were collected for the Freedman's House at Davis Bend, Mississippi, the former home of Jefferson and Joseph Davis.<sup>112</sup> Its activities expanded after the end of the war; contributions were solicited from local merchants, both of goods and money.<sup>113</sup> Letters were received and published from the recipients of this aid, most notably from missionaries in the Georgia Sea Islands.<sup>114</sup> Despite this, interest waned and contributions ceased, and the Freedman's Aid Society was forced to disband in March of 1866.<sup>115</sup>

As soon as the first soldiers returned from the front, interest was expressed in erecting a suitable monument to those who had died in the war. T. P. Collins offered the profits of a lecture series, hopefully to feature a talk by Frederick Douglass to help underwrite this project, but the plan did not succeed.<sup>116</sup> The next year a town meeting appropriated \$2,000 for the erection of a monument on the Green.<sup>117</sup> This was not enough money, and the plan lagged until a fair was held in 1870 to raise the balance of \$3,000.



On May 26, 1871, Colonel L. B. Walkley, the first Westfield officer to head a local company, unveiled the monument.<sup>118</sup> It featured a bronze soldier atop a pedestal bearing the roll of honor of 66 Westfield men whose deaths were connected with the Civil War. The model for the soldier was Andrew Campbell, with the late Pliny Wood, a party in the controversy over the first lieutenantcy of Company K of the Tenth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.<sup>119</sup>

With the dedication of the monument, interest in the Civil War declined, being rekindled occasionally on anniversaries and on the deaths of war veterans. Westfield's last Civil War veteran, George W. Frost, died September 16, 1941, at the age of 98. He had enlisted three times, lying about his age and being taken back by his father each time. As soon as he reached the enlistment age of nineteen, he volunteered in Blandford to help fill their quota of eleven, after first offering his last ten dollars to encourage others to enlist.<sup>120</sup> He typified the spirit that motivated the early Westfield volunteers and which flourished until continuing Union losses and the attempted coercion of the draft created resentment which soured the patriotic impulse.

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