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MADISON MEETS A CALL FOR TROOPS

By Paulette Clark Kaufmann

On September 15, 1862, 18 months into the Civil War, 14-year-old Emilie Ely of Madison wrote to her married sister Elizabeth. She told of the family's activities and the most pressing news: the threat of a draft should Madison not meet its quota for Lincoln's mid-summer call for 300,000 more men to fight in the Union army. Connecticut was expected to provide more than 7,000 men, of whom 118 were to come from Madison. One of Emilie and Elizabeth's three brothers had been fighting for the last year, and another had recently enlisted. Would the war claim their youngest brother, too?

Two months earlier, in July, Madison had held a special town meeting to vote "for the purpose of encouraging enlistments." It was decided to set aside \$100 per enlistee, \$75 for a bounty to be paid to the enlistee and \$25 toward a fund to cover wounds, sickness, and disability should it be needed by the soldier or his family.

In the 1860s Madison was home to more than 400 families with 338 men between the ages of 20 and 45, most of whom were engaged



right: Daniel Hand (1801-1891) returned to Madison during the Civil War while his Southern partner successfully managed his business interests.
Madison (CT) Historical Society



Rev. Samuel W. Fiske (1828-1864), beloved pastor of Madison's First Congregational Church, enlisted in 1862 and was mortally wounded in the Battle of the Wilderness.
Charlotte L. Everts Memorial Archives, Madison, CT

in farming. But by early September the bounty offer had produced just 57 volunteers, too few to meet Madison's quota of 118. A call-up was announced. If Madison was not able to meet its quota in the two-day period, the town's only remaining option was to resort to a draft.

In her letter Emilie described the first day of the call-up, during which only half of Madison's

below: The news of Moses Stannard's imprisonment in 1861 for his outspoken opposition to the Civil War was carried in the *Hartford Daily Courant* and in newspapers across the country. Early American Newspapers, an Archive of Americana Collection, published by Readex (Readex.com), a division of NewsBank, Inc.

ARREST.—Moses J. Stannard of Madison, a noisy Secessionist, non-descript flag raiser, and bogus peace man, has finally brought himself in collision with the government. Marshal Carr, received on Saturday an order from the State Department for his arrest and lodgment, in Fort Lafayette. The Marshal went out on the Shore line road Sunday evening. Made the arrest early Monday morning, and at half past 9 passed through New Haven direct for Fort Lafayette. Mr. Stannard is about forty, has a wife and one child, and is possessed of some thousands of

remaining quota was met. Emilie provided an hour-by-hour account as men came forward, singly or by twos. Thirty-three men eventually enlisted, bringing the total to 88, among them 21-year-old Charles, the youngest of Emilie's brothers, who had just graduated from Yale.

The quota unmet, the town scheduled a draft to begin at 9:00 the next morning.

Not all of Madison's townspeople shared the same feelings about slavery and the war. The issue of slavery aside, many residents had commercial ties to the South, where the cotton economy provided much opportunity. The most successful of them was Madison-born Daniel Hand, who had lived and conducted business in Augusta, Georgia from the 1820s up through the declaration of war. By then Hand had relocated to New York City, from where he managed the firm's Northern business relationships. But it was during the Civil War that his firm truly flourished (under the management of Hand's Southern partner), earning him a small fortune, part of which he donated to the town of Madison after the war to establish a school that would carry his name. (The Hand Academy, a quasi-public high school that charged modest fees for attendance, later became the Daniel Hand High School when public high school education became the norm in the state.)

Some residents responded early to the abolitionist cause but found themselves in the minority. Around 1839 Chloe Scranton Bushnell, known for her support of the anti-slavery cause, invited friends and sympathizers to hear the noted abolitionist and clergyman Ichabod Coddington speak in her parlor. Coddington was an eloquent and stirring speaker on the subject of liberty and the cost of slavery. As news of Coddington's presence spread, the Bushnells' house was mobbed by a group of villagers who gathered outside to pelt the building with rotten eggs. Wanting to protect his mother and her guests, 15-year-old Nathan Bushnell took an old revolutionary war musket

down from the kitchen wall and stood pointing its barrel out the open front doorway to deter the troublemakers from further assault.

As the prospect of a civil war loomed mid-century, feelings about the Union's position were mixed. Mass meetings in favor of the war were held, complete with torchlight parades, flags flying on the town green at full mast, and house windows lit with candles. However, at least one Southern sympathizer, Moses J. Stannard, would not place lights in his window and flew a Southern flag to show his support for Southern secession, until he was arrested in September 1861 on orders of the U.S. State Department and imprisoned at Fort Lafayette in New York Harbor for disloyalty to the American cause.

Emilie's brother Charles was just one of many Madison residents who responded to the call-up in 1862. Rev. Samuel W. Fiske, the much beloved pastor of Madison's First Congregational Church, set an extraordinary example by signing his enlistment papers during a church service. Two years into the war, during the Battle of the Wilderness in May 1864, Rev. Fiske was struck in the neck by a Confederate bullet. News of his wounding and hospitalization was telegraphed to New England papers, which posted day-by-day accounts of his protracted death. The man who had preached such memorable and meaningful sermons from his pulpit and who, as "Dunn Browne," wrote a regular column of acute observations about the war for the *Springfield Republican*, was now silenced forever.

Emilie died within six months of her brothers' departure, and she never saw them again. Edgar returned home to farm alongside his father; Willoughby suffered chronic illnesses after the war and made a scant living as a grocer, and Charles became a well-known educator of the deaf. ▶

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WAR

THE COMES TO TOWN

CONNECTICUT SAW NO ACTUAL COMBAT ON ITS SOIL DURING THE CIVIL WAR. YET THE CONFLICT MADE ITS MARK ON THE STATE IN WAYS HISTORY IS STILL SORTING OUT. HERE ARE ACCOUNTS OF THE CIVIL WAR'S IMPACT ON TWO CONNECTICUT TOWNS.

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THE PEACE MOVEMENT IN LITCHFIELD

By Julie Frey Leone

By the middle of the 19th century Litchfield had evolved from a bustling commercial center into a pastoral hilltop town. With the closest railroad station seven miles away, industrial efforts had moved to Torrington, Winsted, and Waterbury along the Naugatuck River. The majority of the 3,200 residents ran small agricultural and dairy farms or operated shops along West Street. Old photographs from the time show clapboard buildings along wide dusty roads. The names on many of the shop signs trace back to the founding families of Litchfield.

The peace of this historic community was shattered with the tumultuous start of the Civil War. Residents were hardly unanimous in their sentiments toward the war. Some residents advocated for peace and were quickly labeled “secessionists” or “copperheads,” terms used to label Northerners with pro-Southern sympathies. Their arguments for a peaceful solution to the conflict were anathema to the majority, who quickly denounced any dissenting opinion as unpatriotic and traitorous.

Tempers flared in August 1861 when a white flag symbolizing opposition to the war was spotted hanging outside the home of Andrew Palmer, just north of Litchfield in Goshen. A group of five men was elected to speak with Palmer about lowering the flag. Their efforts proved to be in vain. The flag appeared again the next morning. According to the *Litchfield Enquirer* a group of 100 men assembled in front of the Congregational Church in Goshen and marched toward the Palmer property. The flag was removed before the mob arrived. The crowd demanded the flag be turned over. Palmer refused and was arrested. He was taken before a local justice of the peace and signed an oath promising to refrain from flying peace flags. To address the problems of war dissent,



The southeast block of West Street, Litchfield as it looked in the Civil War era, 1867. These buildings burned in 1886.

Litchfield Historical Society

on September 1, 1861, Governor William Buckingham issued a proclamation outlawing the display of peace flags.

Less than a year later, a peace convention was organized in Morris (a town that itself had “seceded” from Litchfield in 1859 to form its own government). A platform was erected on the property of Morris Ensign, and the outspoken peace proponent Reverend Ellis B. Schnable was scheduled to be the event’s key speaker. The rally was disrupted when Schnable was arrested on a federal warrant just after he spoke. We learn from a Litchfield soldier’s letter home what became of Schnable; Alva Stone of Litchfield, who joined the 8th Connecticut Regiment in October 1861, wrote to his wife Lucy on November 17, 1862,

I see by the paper that “Schnable” of “Peace Meeting” notoriety is figuring in the rebel army in Arkansas and so he at least has found his proper place while his audiences are deserting the cause of the rebels and trying to creep back into decent society- What has become of your peace men that used to congregate in your village and hold forth evenings[?]

Townsppeople responded by forming the Litchfield Vigilance Committee, which appears to have consisted of rowdy young men who used the veil of the committee to intimidate residents they viewed as unpatriotic. One incident recounted by Esther Thompson, then

“Peace.”

Several “Peace Meetings” have lately been held in some of the western towns of this County. Meetings ostensibly for peace, with a great cry of peace, but held under such suspicious circumstances and controlled by men of such well known tendencies and sentiments that they have thought to be but the flimsy disguise which is used to cover the pitiful efforts of traitors, of whom our County has a small sprinkling.

And the suspicions of the patriotic become tolerably well grounded when at these “Peace” meetings,—the placid and plausible agent of the Bridgeport Farmer appears, pencil in hand, and “takes the opportunity” to solicit subscriptions to that treasonable sheet, than which none is more rank secessionist and traitorous, north or south of Mason and Dixon’s line. In fact respectable people are beginning to believe these “Peace” meetings are gotten up for the special purpose of aiding that treacherous and dying sheet, not to speak of the placid and plausible agent.

We give these meetings the benefit of this gratuitous notice now, merely to put our friends on their guard.

Litchfield Enquirer, July 11, 1861.
Litchfield Historical Society

10 years old, involved the Palmers (no direct relation to Andrew Palmer), an elderly couple from Litchfield. According to Thompson, Mr. Palmer was an outspoken “copperhead.” One night a group of 40 to 50 men tacked an American flag to the front of the Palmer house and then bullied the Palmers into signing an oath of allegiance.

Even the most prominent of Litchfield’s citizens was not free from scrutiny. In an incident that garnered state-wide media attention, Dr. Josiah Beckwith, a well-respected medical physician of Litchfield and acting



Presentation of Colors to the 19th Connecticut Regiment, Litchfield, September 10, 1862.

Litchfield Historical Society

president of the Connecticut State Medical Society, was accused of providing drafted soldiers with medical exemptions from military duty in exchange for money. He answered his accusers in an editorial in the *Litchfield Enquirer*, stating, “we regard it a solemn and responsible duty which devolves on military surgeons, to muster none but proper men into the Federal Service . . . the reports of Hospital Surgeons and the medical press have shown the disasters which have resulted from mustering men having ‘Hernia, Varcicle, [sic] Heart and Chest diseases.’” Though no criminal charges were brought against Beckwith, his participation in the medical screening of military soldiers was suspended August 1862.

Articles in the *Litchfield Enquirer*, which from June 27, 1861 to February 13, 1862 had closely monitored and denounced the peace movement in the county, suddenly stopped appearing. From that point forward the town maintained a united front in favor of the war.

The mythology of the Civil War holds that citizens of the North were uniformly pro-Union. History reveals a different story. While the peace movement in Litchfield may have been short-lived, it provides an important reminder of the disparity in public opinion during the first few turbulent months of the Civil War. ◀



Dr. Josiah Gale Beckwith and son, artist unknown, c. 1845. The respected Litchfield doctor was suspected of providing medical exemptions to drafted soldiers in exchange for money.

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