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“WE RESPECT THE FLAG BUT...”: OPPOSITION TO THE CIVIL WAR IN DOWN EAST MAINE

BY TIMOTHY F. GARRITY

Although Maine is commonly remembered as one of the states most supportive of the Union during the Civil War, many of its citizens were implacably opposed to the conflict, and they voiced their opposition loudly and persistently from the war's beginning until its end. Others weighed in on the topic more quietly but just as forcefully when they refused to enlist and evaded conscription by any effective means. While many studies have explored the history of Copperheadism and associated the political movement with populations that were urban, immigrant, and Catholic, there has been almost no prior investigation of Down East Maine, where the population was almost entirely rural, native, and Protestant. While opposition to the war was expressed in bitter and polemical newspaper editorials, men who avoided military service did so for more pragmatic reasons, such as the need to maintain a business or provide for a family. Many people of Down East Maine wanted simply to be left alone and not be compelled to participate in a war they regarded as costly, destructive, and foolhardy. The author is the executive director of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society. He is also a master's degree candidate in the History Department at the University of Maine.

IN THE COMMON American memory of the Civil War, Maine is counted among the northern states most solidly supportive of the Union cause, sending to the fight more than thirty regiments of soldiers and thousands of sailors. Of the state's approximately 300,000 male inhabitants, almost 70,000 men served in the military, and more than 28,000 of these were wounded, killed, or died of disease.¹ Maine civilians expressed their support too, cheering as the men left home and marched away to the seat of war. Their majority votes at town meetings raised bounties to encourage enlistment and assist soldiers' families. They sent gifts of food, blankets, bandages, clothing, newspapers, and affectionate letters to their soldiers far from home. Booming cannon and pealing church bells spread the news when the Union armies won battles.

This collective memory was reinforced after the war, when surviving veterans remembered their lost comrades and relived their experiences through a voluminous post-war literature, consisting of thousands of pages of regimental histories, personal memoirs, and speeches. On Mount Desert Island, the veterans formed a Grand Army of the Republic lodge, and their meetings, ceremonies, stories, and parades expressed a fervent patriotism from the end of the war until 1935, when the last surviving member of the lodge handed over the old flags and the post album to the safekeeping of the comparatively young men of the American Legion.² The Civil War continues to be highly visible in Maine's landscape, living on in monuments that abide in cemeteries and public squares of almost every town and village in the state.

Despite the large numbers of people who expressed support for the Union war effort in the North, there was also a significant, persistent, and vocal minority that opposed it. Known variously as Tories, Secesh, or Peace Democrats, war opponents came to be known most popularly as Copperheads, a name first given to them by a letter writer to a Cincinnati newspaper who equated them to the snake in Genesis. Copperheads eventually took on the appellation with pride, wearing on their lapels the Indian Head penny, with its image of Lady Liberty, who symbolized their belief that they were defending the Constitution. Copperheads were generally despised by those who supported the war effort. Some Union soldiers, historian James McPherson points out, would rather shoot a Copperhead than a Confederate soldier, whom at least they respected. McPherson cites a Maine soldier who wrote, "If I could shoot a Copperhead I should feel more elated than to have the privilege of bayoneting a Rebel captain."³

Historians have examined wartime dissent since at least the early twentieth century, often focusing on Copperheadism in individual states of the North.⁴ Historian Jennifer Weber has written the most thorough treatment of the Copperheads. She found that antiwar sentiment was present early in the war, that it was a widespread and divisive force throughout the towns and villages of the North, and that it hindered the northern war effort to the extent that Union soldiers viewed their Copperhead enemies at home as a greater threat than the Confederates at the front.⁵ According to the historiography on Civil War opponents in the North, immigrants, Catholics, and city-dwellers made up a substantial proportion of the Copperheads. In addition, almost all were Democrats.⁶

War opponents in Down East Maine rarely fit the typical image of



Known as Tories, Secesh, or Peace Democrats, war opponents came to be known most popularly as Copperheads. Copperheads were despised by those who supported the war effort. Here they are pictured threatening Lady Columbia with her shield "Union." From *Harper's Weekly*, February 28, 1863, p. 144. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

the Copperhead. Mount Desert Island was a remote and rural island on the Down East coast, located about fifty miles from Bangor. Immigrants comprised only 1.6 percent of the population, and Catholics were a rare and not necessarily welcome sight. The nearest Catholic church was located in Ellsworth about twenty miles away, and even there, in 1854, Father John Bapst had been tarred and feathered by a gang of anti-Catholic Nativists.⁷ When examining the 1860 census records, one cannot even safely assume that all the few Irish immigrants were Catholic. One of the few native-born Irishmen on Mount Desert Island, I. A. Barkwell, identified himself as a Baptist preacher.⁸ This examination of Copperheadism in Down East Maine shows that war opposition was not limited to Catholic immigrants in northern cities, but was also a phenomenon found among rural Protestants whose families had been present in America for three generations or more.

Although much work has been done on wartime dissent throughout the North or in certain states, Copperheadism in Maine has been almost completely ignored. This essay examines wartime dissent in Down East



In the mid-nineteenth century, Mount Desert Island was made up of three towns: Mount Desert, Tremont, and Eden (now known as Bar Harbor). These three towns consistently met their quotas of men for the war, although Tremont did have a strong anti-war element among its population. Courtesy of Fogler Library Special Collections, University of Maine.

Maine, particularly on Mount Desert Island. In the 1860s, the island was home to three communities, Mount Desert, Tremont, and Eden. In total, these three towns had a population of 3,930 in 1860.⁹ The people there mostly made a living by farming the rocky soil, by fishing, or in the coastal trade, taking goods like lumber and cod to the cities of the eastern seaboard and returning with coal or manufactured goods. Women worked mostly in the home, though they often bore the brunt of the farm chores for extended periods when their men were at sea.

Politically, Maine was predominantly a Republican state. About sixty

percent of the citizens of Mount Desert Island voted for the Republican candidates in the presidential election of 1860 and the gubernatorial election of 1861. Although in the minority, Democrats in this region were not silent. They voiced concerns about the election of Republican Abraham Lincoln to the presidency, the possibility of disunion and war, and the prosecution of the war once it began in April 1861.

War opponents in Down East Maine expressed their dissension from the beginning of the war until its end and in a variety of ways. Anti-war opinion was expressed vehemently in newspapers, until most of those newspapers were shut down by rioting mobs or abandoned by advertisers and subscribers. There was no newspaper on Mount Desert Island in the 1860s, but war opponents could read friendly views in newspapers from nearby towns, such as the *Machias Union* or the *Bangor Democrat*. Private citizens demonstrated against the war in acts of vandalism and nonconformity. For example, Copperheads often tore down or refused to fly the flag. Many men who opposed the war declined to volunteer for the army and, once the federal draft was implemented, evaded the draft by fraud or flight. When it came to elections, four of ten votes were cast for candidates who declared their opposition to the administration's war policy.¹⁰

1861: A Divided State

The sectional conflict moved beyond mere rhetoric following the election of 1860, as ultimately eleven southern states seceded from the Union. The election of Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin alarmed most wealthy southern slaveholders, who feared that the institution of slavery would come to an end under a Republican administration. The new president sought to placate slaveholders in his first inaugural address when he said, "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so."¹¹ When the Confederate states seceded despite his assurances, Lincoln continued to insist that he would not interfere with the institution of slavery, and that federal government's purpose in going to war was merely to preserve the Union.

The *Bangor Whig and Courier* expressed the opinion of many Maine citizens in a June 1861 editorial entitled, "What We Are Fighting For." The editors declared that the dissolution of the Union would make it impossible for the United States to be a world power among nations. The federal government was fighting, they said, "To be one of the na-

tions of the world . . . to determine whether we are really a power in Christendom, or whether we are a loose aggregation of thirty-four separate and distinct states... having not strength to defend ourselves against foreign aggression and having not cohesion enough to command respect from any second-rate power of the world.”¹² In contrast, war opponents believed from the beginning that slavery was the central issue of the conflict, and that northern abolitionists had caused the war by driving a wedge between the North and South. By 1864, in his second inaugural address, Lincoln acknowledged that slavery “was somehow the cause of the war.”¹³

When Confederate batteries in Charleston, South Carolina, fired on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, the news of the beginning of the Civil War electrified the country. Within three days, Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers to be raised according to a quota assigned to each state. Maine’s quota for this first call was a mere 780 men.¹⁴ But, the state immediately set out to raise 10,000 troops and quickly succeeded.¹⁵ Initially, the rosters of volunteer regiments were filled by men who were motivated by patriotism, encouraged by local society, and expectant of ample bounties. For the most part these men anticipated that the southern states would be quickly chastised and return to the Union.

In addition to state and federal bounties, the town of Mount Desert voted to raise a \$100 bounty for each soldier that enlisted.¹⁶ In the first months of the war, twenty-one men from Mount Desert enlisted as volunteers. Some families saw all of their eligible young men enter the service. Reuben Smith of Mount Desert sent four of his sons off to the Union army.¹⁷ Young women also encouraged local boys to enlist, and berated those who did not. James M. Parker from Somesville, a village within the town of Mount Desert, wrote to his sister to report that a friend from home, Lizzie Young, was “down on all those who don’t enlist. I tell you she gave some of the Somesville boys a terrible raking.”¹⁸ The fear of having their manhood challenged led many young men to enlist.

Yet, despite the efforts of Miss Young and others, there was significant opposition to the war, the Lincoln administration’s prosecution of the war, and, later, the draft. Evidence of dissension is often found in the documents of the war’s most ardent supporters. As one pro-Union diarist recalled, “There was a mania for displaying the stars and stripes,” yet there were many whose refusal to display the flag “made the place conspicuous, and at once stamped those controlling it as disloyal.”¹⁹ The *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* announced, “Some scoundrels, probably

secessionists who have profited by the teachings of the *Bangor Democrat*, cut down the flag staff at North Bluehill one night last week. We hope they will be found out and punished.”²⁰ A loyal Union man later wrote that Copperheads gave “their support all through the dark days to those seeking to overthrow the republic. These men and their families became marked people, were ostracized and ignored by the loyal sons and daughters of Eastern Maine and were made to feel, in various ways, that they were held in great contempt by the masses.”²¹

War opponents usually came from the ranks of the Democratic Party and their arguments against the war were widely discussed in the press of the day. They blamed Lincoln and the Republicans, not southerners, for causing southern secession. Many Copperheads pointed to the Constitution of the United States, which they said permitted and safeguarded the institution of slavery, a position backed by the Supreme Court when it ruled in the Dred Scott decision in 1858. Most Democrats in Maine and elsewhere in the North also supported states’ rights over the power of the federal government.²²

In addition, racism was common even among those fighting for the Union cause. When a Captain Hight was mustering men into the Eighth Maine Regiment, he noticed a black man standing in the ranks. He ordered the man removed, but the would-be soldier reappeared in another section of the regiment. Hight found him again and ordered the man’s name struck from the roll, saying that he had come to muster “white citizens, not negroes.”²³ Even though New England was the seat of abolitionism, there were many Maine citizens who had no desire, and believed they had no right or reason, to interfere in the institution of slavery. Copperheads believed Abolitionists, not slaveholders, were the cause of sectional strife. On a visit to Portland in August 1858, the future president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, declared that abolitionists were the disunionists in the debate over slavery, and said it was the Democratic Party that stood “by the barriers of the constitution, to protect them from the waves of fanatical and sectional aggression.”²⁴

The Anti-War Press in Maine

The press was highly partisan in the nineteenth-century United States. Democratic newspapers throughout the North varied in regards to their stance on the war, but many openly opposed the Union war effort. In Maine, the beliefs of Copperheads were expressed in an uncompromising anti-war press, of which the *Machias Union* was a prominent example. In April 1861, as artillery batteries were turned towards the be-

sieged Fort Sumter, the *Union* published the lyrics of the southern anthem "Dixie" on its front page. The *Union* attacked rival papers, condemning their "'nigger' philanthropy," and blamed the Lincoln administration for its "'nigger' agitation."²⁵ The paper warned that Lincoln was a mere "cipher" in the hands of "abolition confederates" who were making preparations "for the immediate commencement of civil war!" The editor, G.W. Drisko, declared, "Instead of peace there will be war. Instead of plenty there will be destitution and suffering. Instead of kindly and fraternal feeling there will be deadly hate and revenge."²⁶ By the time the next issue of the paper was on the streets, the terrible rumors of war were confirmed. The editor placed blame on the Republican Party, "that sectional and fanatical party" that had "now fully inaugurated their mad scheme of an 'irrepressible conflict' between the North and the South."²⁷

The *Machias Union* defended the patriotism of Democrats who, "with sorrowing hearts . . . have witnessed the black flag of Abolitionism waving over a divided and disintegrated Union." As for Lincoln and the Republicans, the editor wrote, "We respect the flag but detest his piratical nigger worshipping crew." The *Union* warned that the officers and men of the United States Army and Navy would refuse to fight for the abolitionist cause. The paper appealed for compromise and peace, quoting the phrase from the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the Peacemakers." And as the nation plunged towards war, the paper encouraged all good Democrats to refuse to fight. It opined, "Let every Democrat fold his arms and bid the minions of tory despotism do a tory despot's work." Democrats, the paper said, had "warned their countrymen against the troubles we are now experiencing, and feel as though, having done their duty honestly, they are not responsible for the present war."²⁸

Abraham Lincoln's initial acts, to raise an army and suspend the writ of habeas corpus, aroused the ire of anti-war Democrats. The *Machias Union* decried these measures that came "closer to acts of crowned heads of the old world, than anything which has occurred under our system of government." How, the editor asked, could the Union be preserved through a policy that alienated the affections of southern people? The South was merely asking for a peaceable separation, the editor contended, declaring, "Jefferson Davis does not wish to invade Northern territory. No Southern man of any account has ever expressed a wish to molest the Northern people who mind their own business." The southern people, they argued, would never re-enter the Union by being coerced, and the Democratic Party of the North "*will* not consent to commence much less aid to carry on a war of subjugation on the South!"²⁹

By the summer of 1861, the *Machias Union* pointed to the effect of the war on common people. An array of government spending increases and borrowing to fund the raising and equipping of troops had resulted in tax increases. Wrote the editor: "While taxation has been increasing five fold, business has been ruined, the country plunged into a civil war, the Constitution and the laws trampled under foot. The prospect ahead for the poor people, for the day laborers, mechanics, the small property holders, looks gloomy and forbidding."³⁰ Poor and working men, the paper contended, would suffer the most because of the war.

The *Union* invoked war's horrors in a way that was nothing like the glorious struggle euphemistically portrayed in Republican newspapers. War did not consist of a "splendid charge," with an enemy "annoying the right wing," and artillery that "effectually held them in check." Instead, in war, "There will be the full complement of backs broken in two; of arms twisted wholly off; of men impaled upon their own bayonets; of heads sliced open like apples; of other heads crunched into soft jelly by iron hoofs of horses; of faces trampled out of all likeness to anything human. This is what skulks behind a 'splendid charge.'" Such scenes, the paper reported, had resulted in many a youth going to war a Republican, but returning a Democrat.³¹

The possibility of emancipation became a controversial issue as early as the fall of 1861. Although President Lincoln claimed to have no power to free the South's slaves, many abolitionists had high hopes that the war would finally lead to the abolition of slavery, thereby morally redeeming the nation. Other northerners had practical reasons for desiring emancipation. The *Ellsworth American* viewed abolition as a practical military tool to be used to win the war. The editor wrote, "If the men of the North are expected to sacrifice their houses and lands, yes, their best blood and the best blood of their sons, to maintain their country, the men of the South must be expected to sacrifice at least their slaves."³²

The *Machias Union* countered that abolition was an "inhuman" policy that would lead to "the sable hordes" unleashing "murder and outrage" upon the South. Such a policy, "violates the rules of civilized warfare." One million black men, the *Union* wrote, "are capable of doing an immense work in the destruction of human life. The project once started, the negro butcherers once well at their work, who could tell where it would end?" Northern states could become the victims of "Negro barbarity," the paper said, and require an army of one-half million to suppress them, "and only an extermination of the race in the country would put an end to their murderous work."³³ When the *Bath Times*

warned that slaveholders would only have themselves to blame if the war resulted in emancipation, the *Union* derided the rival paper for being “received into the communion of negro worshippers.”³⁴

The newspapers available to readers in Down East Maine were polemical by nature, their positions staked out at extremes that did not necessarily reflect public opinion. The anti-war convictions of Copperhead newspapers were taken seriously by supporters of the administration’s war policy. Opposition editorials and stories had the potential to discourage enlistment in the armed forces. Thus, war supporters believed that the enemies of the Union were not just the men of the Confederate army, but the editors of anti-war newspapers.

Suppression of the Anti-War Press

The inflammatory rhetoric of the anti-war papers soon brought demands for their suppression. By May 1861, the *Machias Union* and other Democratic newspapers around the state were being accused by rival Republican papers of disloyalty. The *Ellsworth American* reminded the public that during the Revolutionary War, the pressrooms of Tory newspapers were destroyed by American soldiers, and the type was melted into bullets.³⁵ The potential for Copperhead newspapers to undermine the Union war effort was taken seriously by supporters of the war, the president, and Union soldiers. President Lincoln, for example, wondered, “Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wiley agitator who induces him to desert?”³⁶ A soldier from Tremont wrote to the *Ellsworth American*:

There will be a day of reckoning for *Northern traitors*, for [we] look upon them as far worse than Southern Rebels, and the privilege of hanging a few thousand of them would be hailed with greater joy, than the capture of Richmond. For my own part, I believe that the hemp cravat is the only effectual remedy for treason, and if those copperheads do not mend their ways before the soldiers get home, I am afraid somebody will lose the number of their mess. But the State will soon be under martial law, and if necessary there will be a few men sent to enforce it, if so those fellows had better be *praying* than *preaching treason*.³⁷

Within six months of the war’s start, many Democratic newspapers had been sacked or closed down. When the anti-war *Bangor Daily Union* suspended operations, the editors cited the threat of mob violence as one of the reasons for its demise. To this, the Republican *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* snorted that such a statement “excites a smile, when it is known that for months it has required the earnest efforts of our leading

citizens, to prevent that concern from being thrown into the river.”³⁸ Other anti-war papers were forced out of business too, including the *Franklin Patriot*, the *Kennebec Courier*, and the *Augusta Age*. They died, the *Ellsworth American* scoffed, “of intense copperheadism.”³⁹

The most intense violence against an anti-war newspaper occurred in Bangor. On August 12, 1861, the office and presses of the *Bangor Democrat* were destroyed by a mob. A crowd estimated at 2,000 people tore apart the offices and threw the presses, type, furniture, and papers into a bonfire. Marcellus Emery, the editor of the paper, waded into the crowd, despite threats that he would be beaten or tarred and feathered. He had been warned that such an act would come, but he said his “duty to the public required of me that I should not yield to the demands and pressures of a lawless mob.” He said, “Though anarchy seems to be coming down upon our unhappy country like night . . . I still believe that there is yet virtue and intelligence enough in the people to maintain their liberties and to protect a free Press, which is their best guardian.”⁴⁰ After the *Bangor Democrat* was destroyed, a Union meeting was held and a resolution adopted that declared that such papers were lending “aid and comfort to the armed enemies of our country, which makes its editors, publishers and proprietors guilty of treason.”⁴¹

After the war, Emery brought suit against members of the mob and the case was finally resolved in 1866. All but two of the men who destroyed the paper were acquitted. Although the wrecked equipment was valued at more than \$2,400, the jury said that the *Bangor Democrat* “was a nuisance, and should have been suppressed, or, in otherwise, it was, justifiable to destroy it. We find the property destroyed, over and above what was necessary, is \$916.66.”⁴² More than twenty years later, a Union man wrote that the sacking of the *Bangor Democrat* “was not the ill-advised act of a few fanatics, but was accomplished by our best citizens, and considered by them a loyal and law-preserving necessity.” The writer said, “Gentlemen now living who took part in the destruction declare to this day that it was a grand work, and convinced the men in the army that no ‘rear fire’ would be tolerated.”⁴³

The vigor with which the suppression of the anti-war press was undertaken has been cited as evidence of Down East Maine’s support for the war. Yet the presence of Copperhead newspapers, and their obstinacy in the face of threats and violence, suggests a corresponding determination and vehemence on the part of war opponents. Opposition to the war was soon to be carried out in practical terms as well, in the form of opposition to enlistment and the draft.

1862: Draft Avoidance Begins

In the first months of the war, the political arguments in the newspaper, the news of local boys gone to camp, and the stories of far-away battles remained mostly theoretical issues, rather than near and present matters of life or death. But, in 1862, a policy decision by the Lincoln administration made the consequences of the war an immediate concern for almost everyone. The administration recognized that if an insufficient number of volunteers enlisted in the army, conscription would have to be imposed. As the fiery Copperhead congressman Clement Vallandigham of Ohio later declared, "Seventy-five thousand first . . . then eighty-three thousand more were demanded; and three hundred and ten thousand responded . . . The President next asked for four hundred thousand, and Congress . . . gave him five hundred thousand; and, not to be outdone, he took six hundred and thirty-seven thousand." Vallandigham thundered, "The fabled hosts of Xerxes have been outnumbered."⁴⁴ By the end of the war, the total number of troops called for by the federal government amounted to more than 2.9 million, of which Maine was given a quota of 73,587 and supplied 69,738.⁴⁵

The Militia Act of 1862 and President Lincoln's call for 300,000 troops in August 1862 put the nation on notice that a draft was coming if volunteers were insufficient to meet the needs of the army. The act permitted the president to issue calls for troops and left to the states the responsibility of raising men in sufficient numbers to meet their assigned quota. But in the event that the state failed to raise its quota, the president was empowered to conscript the number of troops needed. In Maine, each town was assigned a quota, from which the number of volunteers enlisted previously was subtracted. Any deficiency would have to be filled through a draft.⁴⁶

The *Ellsworth American* took such measures as a sign that the administration was getting serious about prosecuting the war.⁴⁷ The new enlistees were to each serve a term of nine months, a length of time that reflected the belief, still hoped for early in 1862, that the war would be short in duration. A local advertisement said, "Last Chance! A Draft is Coming! Rally boys, and volunteer and receive the Bounties. No drafted men receive bounties."⁴⁸ The *American* urged, "where there is some secesh feeling, and there are stout, able-bodied men discouraging enlistments, let the draft be resorted to and let those men stand their chance."⁴⁹ Conscription would force men into the fight, even if they opposed the war. The draft was seen as a last recourse, a sign of insufficient patriotism and a black mark upon any community that had to resort to

it. Towns were keen to increase the number of volunteers in order to avoid having to draft men. Bounties to encourage enlistment were offered by town, state, and federal governments in amounts that increased as the war went on. A man of means could avoid the draft by paying an exemption fee of \$300 or by hiring a substitute to take his place in the ranks. These provisions were intended to provide a way to fund federal bounties and, supposedly, to keep men in civilian positions who were important to the war effort. But mostly, the exemption and substitution provisions were interpreted as a way for the rich and influential to avoid service while the poor working man had to fight.⁵⁰

Men who could afford to pay the exemption fee or hire a substitute were sometimes the subject of contemptuous comments from their neighbors. James M. Parker, serving with the First Maine Heavy Artillery, received a letter from a boyhood friend, Lyman H. Somes, who had purchased an exemption. Parker wrote that Somes was

overwhelmed by remorse at his neglect of duty and fearing my just displeasure undertook to do something in the way of writing a letter but in my opinion he failed. At any rate, I did not consider it worth a second reading, he wrote, "I thank God that I have got clear of the conscription for three years." Noble youth. His courage and patriotism deserve great praise. Probably his monument will bear some such inscription as this, *Delce at Gloria pro patria mori.*⁵¹

Somes was a clothier, a merchant in the village of Somesville on Mount Desert Island, and a son of a prosperous family. He and Parker had been friends. They grew up in the same neighborhood and attended school together.

Somes' effort – his need – to explain his purchase of an exemption, illustrates the divide that separated those who volunteered and those who stayed out of the fight. Somes was a young man who had a significant financial stake invested in a business. Parker, a young unmarried man of more modest means, was less weighed down by financial responsibilities, whose economic potential was more portable. Somes probably believed that it would be impossible to walk away from his business interests, and viewed his purchase of an exemption as an act of patriotism, his provision of funds fulfilling and equaling Parker's enlistment.

In the neighboring town of Eden (now Bar Harbor), it was considered a matter of civic pride that the town raised funds to purchase substitutes on behalf of men who were subject to the draft. Eben Hamor wrote in his journal, "At the beginning and during the civil war the citizens of Eden were intensely loyal to the Government, always filling our



James M. Parker was a resident of the village of Somesville, which was located in the town of Mount Desert. During the Civil War, Parker served with the First Maine Heavy Artillery. Parker was an unmarried man from a modest background. He did not believe in the idea of purchasing an exemption from the service, and thought that only enlistment would fulfill his duty to his country. Parker was killed in action at Petersburg in 1864. Courtesy of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society.

quota of soldiers called for, either by volunteers or substitutes for drafted men, by raising money, by loan or otherwise, for soldier's bounties, or to buy substitutes, or to provide for soldiers families, promptly, and generally quite unanimously."⁵² Soldiers like James M. Parker obviously viewed matters differently and believed only enlistment fulfilled a man's patriotic responsibility.

Both the commutation and substitution provisions gave rise to resentments among the poor and middle class, and the policy resulted at times in high fees paid to substitutes who never appeared for enlistment or deserted at the first opportunity. Because of these provisions, few men were actually drafted, though a great deal of money was raised. Historian Murray Bowden reports that 1,937 Maine men purchased exemptions at a price of \$581,000.⁵³ In the town of Mount Desert in 1862, no one was drafted but twenty-four men volunteered.⁵⁴

Not everyone was willing or able to choose between enlistment or the purchase of an exemption or substitute, the primary legal routes of avoiding the service. In Eden, a young man named Martin V. Higgins was caught trying to escape the draft. His captors offered him the choice of prosecution or enlistment, and he reluctantly joined the army.⁵⁵ A deserter from Gardiner, who was also apparently a bigamist, was captured when he was "found at the house of one of his wives."⁵⁶ According to a local newspaper, the lighthouse keeper in Prospect was arrested for resisting the draft.⁵⁷



Lyman Some was a resident of the village of Somesville in Mount Desert and a boyhood chum of James M. Parker. Some purchased a draft exemption so that he could continue to run his family business. As a result, Parker questioned Some's patriotism and manhood. Some lived to old age and is pictured here while serving on a grand jury in 1902. Courtesy of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society.

Some men hoped to be rejected by the army when drafted. A young man in Moscow, Maine, cut part of his finger off to avoid the draft, only to see the town meet its quota through enlistment, so that his maiming was for nothing.⁵⁸ Another man went to the dentist to have four front teeth extracted, so that he would be unable to tear a paper cartridge and load a weapon.⁵⁹ It was quickly pointed out that the army was very capable of finding other work for him to do. One newspaper printed a notice that said, "Those drafted persons who have knocked out their front teeth to procure exemption, are informed that they will be accepted into the Cavalry, where front teeth are not needed to bite off cartridges."⁶⁰ In truth, the cavalry was a more attractive branch of the military and did not have to resort to enlisting anyone who would maim himself. But the story illustrates the desperate state of some potential conscripts and the unsympathetic mindset of some of the local newspapers.

In August 1862, Augustus Stevens, the postmaster for the town of Blue Hill, was appointed by Maine's adjutant general, John Hodsdon, to scour the landscape for draft evaders. He traveled from town to town on the Down East coast, inquiring as to the whereabouts of young men of military age. On August 23, he wrote from Tremont that Albert F. Salisbury had gone fishing off Canada's Magdalene Islands. Stevens wrote, "From what I can learn he is no doubt a deserter. Have made arrangements to secure him when he returns."⁶¹

Stevens was more sympathetic towards William G. Pert of Sedgwick,

who deserted from the Second Maine Infantry Regiment. Stevens reported, "He never would have deserted had not his wife written him that his family were suffering for the necessaries of life, and that the Selectmen of Sedgwick refused to supply them."

Steven's opinion was that Pert "should be dealt with leniently as the circumstances will allow. He is a seafaring man and would like to go in the navy."⁶² In the reasons for Pert's desertion, one might find a major cause of draft resistance and war opposition. The departure of a man for military service often meant that his wife and children would be left destitute. In the face of that immediate threat, it was common for a man to judge for himself where his responsibilities lay, to discount patriotic appeals, and measure the risk of flight against the perils of war. It was in this circumstance that the Copperhead argument against the war found many sympathizers. Given the premise that the war was being fought over the institution of slavery, such men believed the freedom of black men was not worth the conscription and subsequent sacrifice of white men.

The town of Tremont on Mount Desert Island was noted to be a center of anti-war sentiment. The *Ellsworth American* reported, "There is a squad of secessionists in the town of Tremont that ought to be made to 'skedaddle' or to enlist."⁶³ In November 1862, the list of towns deficient in supplying soldiers for the draft was published in the *American*. Of the three towns on Mount Desert Island, only Tremont was slow to meet its manpower quota, as the town was eight men short.⁶⁴ Although some towns were slower to fill their quotas than others, the combination of bounties and the threat of the draft were ultimately sufficient in 1862 to assure that every town in Maine eventually met its quota of enlistees.⁶⁵

In late 1862, with the Union army dug in and motionless on the Potomac, the *Ellsworth American* declared, "the cause of the Union looks as dubious as it ever did."⁶⁶ The removal of the exceedingly cautious General George B. McClellan as commander of the Union forces was cause for relief and hope for the war's proponents. In his place, General Ambrose Burnside took command, but he promptly led the Union army into a disastrous assault on Confederate entrenchments at Fredericksburg, Virginia, resulting in a frightful loss of life. On the day after Christmas 1862, members of the Finnely family of Mount Desert pored over the lists of Fredericksburg casualties published in the *Ellsworth American*, and there they found the cryptic note, "Wm. Finnely, arm," a message to darken their imaginations for weeks. Finnely was a prisoner of war and eventually recovered from his wounds, but his family endured many weeks of not knowing his fate.⁶⁷ The war had begun to hit home

in ways that were immediate, personal, and powerful, and the task of raising enough volunteers for the maw of war became markedly harder in the spring of 1863.

1863: Growing Casualties and Disillusionment

As the war went on, notions of swift and glorious victory were gradually dispelled by a series of Union defeats and by the steady attrition of men through disease, death, and desertion.⁶⁸ There was widespread dissatisfaction with the conduct of the war, as well as frustration and weariness with the war's sufferings. But the government's policy of conscription also gave dissidents a focal point for the expression of opposition to the war.

On Mount Desert Island, people in Tremont were apparently more discontented than people in neighboring Eden and Mount Desert. Anger at the war effort reached its peak in Tremont in March 1863. In the village of Southwest Harbor in Tremont, two public meetings dissolved into violent confrontations between Copperheads and Union loyalists. If a Unionist's version of events can be believed, the Copperheads got the upper hand at a first meeting, held in March 1863, causing the Unionists to disperse. At the second meeting, held two weeks later, the Copperheads, though they came armed with sling shots, knives, and revolvers, were chased away by Union supporters.

In the election for Tremont town offices in April 1863, Union supporters were elected by narrow margins over Copperheads. Tremont, the *Ellsworth American* declared, "contains a large nest of old fashioned Democrats, many of whom have heretofore fattened at the public cost, holding some of the best local offices as the gift of the general government."⁶⁹ A small number of surnames dominated the Tremont census of 1860, suggesting the presence of familial ties and loyalties that may have extended into the realm of politics.

In Mount Desert, an atmosphere of discontent was amplified by the accumulating losses of the town's soldiers. By April 1863, thirteen of the town's men were casualties. Emory Pierce had been killed in action at Cedar Mountain, and Lyman Smith and Erastus Reed had been wounded at Fredericksburg. Tylston Atherton and William Finnely had been captured. Eight other men had been discharged from the army for serious diseases that, for some, would prove fatal. By the spring of 1863, much of the town's supply of volunteers had been used up, yet the army's demand for men seemed insatiable. Soldiers at the front reported home with stories of the inept leadership of Union generals and the careless treatment of troops in camp and in the field. In the summer of

1863, three more Mount Desert men died of disease and another was discharged for disability.⁷⁰ Such reports put a damper on volunteering.

The Enrollment Act of 1863, intended to strengthen the draft, replaced reliance on state government with a firm federal administrative structure. Like the Militia Act of 1862, the Enrollment Act was designed to encourage voluntary enlistment, while establishing a bureaucratic structure and process for conducting a draft if needed.⁷¹ A provost marshal was put in charge of the national system, with subordinate provost marshals responsible for implementing the draft within districts of each state. The president would periodically issue a call for troops, and quotas were established for each state to meet its share of the call. Maine's quota was allocated among the state's cities, towns, and plantations according to enrollment lists that had been established in 1861. The enrollment lists were infamously inaccurate, containing the names of men who were no longer residents, men who were too young or too old to serve, foreign citizens, and even the names of dead men. These inaccuracies resulted in some towns bearing an unfair proportion of the state's quota. For a time, coastal towns like Mount Desert were further disadvantaged because they were not given credit for their men who had joined the navy. Although many inaccuracies existed, the armies in the field were desperate for fresh men, so errors were rarely corrected because of the time that process would take. The pro-Republican press urged the public to stay calm and comply with the orders of the provost marshal.⁷²

Some men refused to take part in the war, but the draft cut off their escape. Fear, anger, and resentment towards the draft sometimes were expressed in violence and crime. A physician in Waldo County was charged by the local provost marshal with carrying out a fraud to help men obtain medical exemptions from the draft. Dr. Jacob Brown was accused of administering medicines (one might say "poisons") that would make mild medical conditions worse so that men would be disqualified.⁷³ In October 1863, Copperheads were accused of setting fire to three barns in Gouldsboro and vicinity.⁷⁴ Such violent resistance to the draft was not unique to Maine. The best known example came in the summer of 1863, when a brutal uprising of Irish workers in New York City, known as the "Draft Riots," caused widespread property destruction and death, particularly the lynching of free blacks.⁷⁵

Other men tried to avoid service after they were drafted. Once a man was drafted, he was considered a soldier in the army and subject to its discipline. If he failed to report for duty, he was considered a deserter. Drafted men were often confined in army camps or even jails to keep

them from running away. The *Machias Union* mentioned the drafted men who were locked up to keep them from deserting when it railed, "There is a slave mart in Belfast. There are slave pens at Bangor and other cities in Maine. . . . Negroes are not exposed for barter and sale there but the FREE WHITE MEN OF MAINE ARE."⁷⁶ The provost marshals prepared for violent resistance. Captain A.D. Bean, responsible for the district that included Mount Desert Island, wrote to his superior, "I find it absolutely necessary that guards at the Barracks and with detachments sent away should be armed. Can you loan me thirty rifles or muskets and a small quantity of ammunition?"⁷⁷

As early as September 1862, the generally pro-administration *Ellsworth American* expressed impatience with the war's progress, asking what was gained in exchange for the frightful cost. The rebellion seemed no nearer an end, the editors complained, despite the fact that "two hundred thousand of loyal men, have been killed or maimed for life, or have died in the service, or sickness contracted in it. . . . What has been accomplished? What glorious results can the nation point to as an equivalent?"⁷⁸ In July 1863, the government issued a call for 300,000 more men, and urged that volunteers be recruited "with all possible celerity."⁷⁹ Maine's governor, Abner Coburn, noted that any failure of volunteerism would be followed by mandatory conscription. Coburn said the state preferred "to pay liberally for patriotic service rather than exact it by force of law."⁸⁰

By the summer of 1863, a fresh demand was placed on Mount Desert to supply a quota of fourteen more men.⁸¹ If the town failed to meet its quota, it would have to make up the deficiency through the draft. Town selectmen got busy raising bounties and petitioning draft officials to assure the enrollment lists were accurate and quotas were correctly applied. Men were urged to enlist rather than wait to be drafted. By December 1863, Maine towns were typically offering a \$200 bounty for a man to enlist. This amount was allocated in addition to federal and state bounties, so that a re-enlisting veteran might receive up to \$702 and a raw recruit, \$302.⁸² Towns began to compete in a bidding war for volunteers, with some towns offering as much as \$700 per recruit. Eligible men began to abandon their home towns in search of the highest bounty they could obtain. There grew a fear that rich towns would outbid poor towns, leaving the poor towns deprived of volunteers and no way to fill their quota except through the draft. In an attempt to head off a bidding war, the state legislature voted a maximum bounty amount per town of \$350.⁸³

The enlisting agents worked in the face of dreadful news from the front. On November 20, 1863, the *Ellsworth American* printed a list of Maine soldiers killed and wounded at the second Battle of Rappahannock Station in Virginia, an accounting that contained scores of names, many from the Eighth Regiment, a unit that included eight men from Mount Desert.⁸⁴ Yet even in the face of terrible news from the battlefield, the offer of bounties combined with the threat of the draft contributed to the enlistment of thirteen more men from Mount Desert during the period December 1863 to March 1864. The number of enlistments, added to the number of men who purchased exemptions, was sufficient for the town to fulfill its quota and avoid the draft.

1864: The Maw of War and Continued Draft Avoidance

The Union army began a major offensive in the spring of 1864, opening up a series of battles whose names epitomize the most violent clashes in the history of warfare: the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, Petersburg. Supporters of the war effort took the 1864 offensive as a positive sign, after the first three years of the war in the East had resulted in very little military progress. The *Ellsworth American* predicted, "There will still be more hard fighting before this campaign is ended and the great victory won, which will bring peace and a restored Union. From all the reports, and the indications from officials from Washington, everything looks hopeful."⁸⁵

The offensive eventually yielded positive military results, but only after months of horrific losses, seen at home in newspapers filled with lists of the local boys who were casualties. Each line in the lists was terse and cryptic, yet meant the world to anxious families desperate for word of their loved ones. So much was unknown, the *American* wrote, "The reports as to the number killed, wounded and missing must be more guess work. We know, however, that the loss must be heavy."⁸⁶ May 1864 was a month when, the *Ellsworth American* reported, "there was not a whole day of fair weather," and the war news "cast a gloom over many a household, and the public generally."⁸⁷

The offensive was especially hard on the First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment. According to a newspaper advertisement posted in 1862 to encourage enlistment, the unit would be primarily assigned garrison duty, protecting the forts around Washington. The garrison soldier, the advertisement promised, would not "have to be on the move and subject to all the inconveniences, and exposures of a frequent change of position."⁸⁸ The First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment did guard forts for a



3541*

COL. PESSENDEN'S VETERAN REG'T!

VOLUNTEERS WANTED !!

Volunteers wanted for Col. Pesenden's Veteran Regiment now being raised under General Order No. 181 of the War Department.

Bounty of \$402.00 !

Will be paid by the United States Government.

We have the best assurances that the Bounty of \$1000.00 will be secured before leaving the State, making a

Bounty of \$502 !

PAY TO COMMENCE FROM DATE OF ENLISTMENT !!

The liberal Bounty offered by the Government, the great advantages of being in a new Regiment composed almost entirely of Veteran Soldiers who have obtained a full practical knowledge of military life warrants the belief that this Regiment will soon attain its maximum of strength.

For further particulars apply to

LIEUT. HENRY B. CLEAVES,
Recruiting Officer,
Bridgton Center.

From the Bridgton Reporter Job Office - Horace C. Lobb, Printer.

MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY

Recruitment posters were used in the northern states throughout the Civil War to convince men to join the army. Men were offered a bounty for volunteering. The amount of the bounty varied depending on the town. Eventually, the Union needed men so badly the federal government resorted to conscription. Maine Historical Society Collections.

time but was later converted to an infantry unit and ordered to charge heavily-fortified Confederate positions near Petersburg, Virginia. The attack was a disaster. Of the nine hundred men who began the charge, 604 were killed or wounded. The regiment suffered a greater proportional loss of life in a single day's combat of any unit in the war.⁸⁹ Of the twelve men who departed Mount Desert to join the regiment in 1862, ten were casualties.⁹⁰ Even today, a survey of cemeteries on Mount Desert Island shows half a dozen gravestones, all bearing a date of death in June 1864 and an inscription like that of James M. Parker, "Killed before Petersburg."

Some of the Mount Desert men were plunged into combat within a few weeks of their enlistment. Four of them, Jacob Lunt, Chauncy Noyes, Joseph Robinson, and George Thompson, joined the Thirty-first Maine Infantry Regiment in March 1864. By June of that year, Lunt had been wounded at Spotsylvania, Noyes was a prisoner of war, Robinson had died of disease, and Thompson had been killed at Petersburg. The late spring and summer of 1864 were the bloodiest time of the war, for the Union army as a whole, and for Mount Desert too, with a total of seventeen men killed, wounded, missing, or captured between May and August.⁹¹

By 1864, most Maine men who wanted to avoid the draft did so by "skedaddling," escaping to New Brunswick or the woods of northern Maine.⁹² Many who fled the draft stayed in Canada until the war was over. The *Ellsworth American* wrote, "We understand that in some of the towns in this district large numbers of men have 'skedaddled,' or run away to avoid a draft." The paper pointed out that the flight of eligible men made it more likely for men who stayed at home to be drafted, and noted there was a \$30 reward for turning in runaways to the provost marshal.⁹³ In Mount Desert, a young mother and wife of a naval officer, Emily Savage, confirmed that many men had left. She wrote, "I dread to hear of the draft for half that are liable to it have gone off."⁹⁴

The War Department cracked down on desertion and on furloughed soldiers overstaying their leave, saying, "Any officer or private whose health permits him to visit watering places, or places of amusement, or make social visits, or to walk about the town... will be considered fit for military duty, and as evading duty by absence from his command or ranks."⁹⁵ Civilians could be arrested too, for harboring deserters. U.S. marshals were sent out in search of soldiers absent from their regiment, a duty that could prove hazardous.⁹⁶ According to Emily Savage, in October 1864, "The Provost Marshal was shot the other day down east by a

drafted man and also a Mr. Sargent Deputy Sheriff at Brooklin was shot on Deer Island by a drafted man. Really I don't know what this world is coming to. How I do wish the crewel war was over but I want to see it ended right."⁹⁷

In 1864 and 1865, calls for more troops were issued on four separate occasions. Despite all the men that Maine had given already, there seemed to be no end to the demand. The *Machias Union* complained, "What could be more discouraging?"⁹⁸ As historian Murray Bowden has noted, "Towns struggled to fill their quotas only to find themselves burdened with another."⁹⁹

Even the administration's most ardent supporters were discouraged by the conduct of the war. Both Augustus and Emily Savage strongly supported the Republican administration (they named their son Fred *Lincoln* Savage), yet they felt great sympathy for the men who would suffer hardship because of the draft. Augustus was an acting lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, and thus avoided the brutal life of an infantryman. He wrote to Emily in July 1864, "I also see there is to be another draft of 500,000 men which must affect the country sadly. I really pity those that have to leave homes and friends to join the army. Especially those that have families."¹⁰⁰ A few months later he wrote from his naval station, "I think I am tough and can stand most anything but the life of a soldier. I see thousands every day and thank my stars that I am not one of them."¹⁰¹

1865: The War Draws to a Close

Until 1865, the town of Mount Desert avoided having any of its men drafted, because the town always met its quota. But, by March 1865, no more volunteers could be found and a number of men from Mount Desert were selected for the draft. At this point in the war the \$300 exemption provision had been eliminated from the draft regulations. To avoid the draft a substitute would have to be hired. Emily Savage cited two men who hired substitutes, one at a cost of \$700, another for \$900. She was gravely concerned about the consequences to the poor families who could not afford the price of a substitute and stood to lose the labor of their men. She wrote, "Now I think this part of the town has fared hard and it has taken our best and poorest men there is."

She specifically mentioned her friend Alden Jordan, who was the foreman of the works at a local mill. The mill operation depended on his work and, "there is three families that looks to him for help. Mr. Jordan says he can't do a thing in the mill if Alden goes to war as Alden is boss of the work."¹⁰² When the town proposed to raise funds for the support of

the drafted men's families, Emily wrote, "They are going to call a meeting and raise 300 dollars apiece for them that has to go and I am glad of it as the most of them are very poor men."¹⁰³ She pointed to another drafted man, "Isreal Norwood up here in Browns District. The poorest man in town."¹⁰⁴ Emily thought the town selectmen should do more to help men avoid the draft, citing the selectmen from Eden who went to Belfast to negotiate a lower quota. But as for the town of Mount Desert, Emily wrote, "Our select men haint had spunk enough to try to do anything and they are still drafting from the old roll. Some that are drafted have moved away over a year ago so I think this is a terrible little mean town and our first selectman is the little small mean John W. Somes. He has bought a sub so he don't care."¹⁰⁵

In a letter to Emily, Augustus expressed bitterness towards the wealthy men of the town who watched as the poor men were forced to join the army and leave their helpless families behind. "How strange," he wrote,

that those young men of Esqu. Kimballs escaped the draft. I do not wish them any ill but would much rather they could have been accommodated [sic] to the situation than for the old men that have families. I wonder if Mr. K don't think the government is slighting them. If I were a young man I don't believe I would stay at home and see fathers go and leave helpless children to suffer. I should want to have my family represented by one recruit surely.

For his own sake, he said, "I cant say as I am sorry that I am in the service but for you and my children I have spent many sad and lonely hours but hope you will be more cheerful now as the prospect looks fare for a speedy close of the war."¹⁰⁶

In the winter of 1864-1865, it became apparent that the war was drawing to a close. All the casualties, the hardships at home, and the burden of conscription seemed to be adding up to a sum sufficient to purchase an end to the conflict. The *Ellsworth American* declared that it was time to throw everything behind the war effort and finish it. The editor wrote, "The burdens of war have become so heavy of late that the nation, in sheer weariness of the struggle, seems disposed to put an end to it by one mighty blow."¹⁰⁷

The war finally ended with the surrender of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia on April 9, 1865. In Bangor, the news was celebrated with the firing of cannon, ringing of church bells, and hundreds of men marching in the street behind a pair of drummers. The streets of Bangor



R. De Marshan, "Avoiding the Draft," music sheet cover, pasted into the inside cover of "Descriptive Book of Arrested Deserters" kept by the Provost Marshal's Office in the Fifth District of Maine. Courtesy of the National Archives, Waltham, Massachusetts.

were filled with joyous crowds, a diarist wrote; "Some were laughing, some hurrahing . . . when they met, men grabbed each other by the hands and often kissed each other."¹⁰⁸ Some of the celebration was expressed in hostility towards those who had opposed the war. One diarist wrote that he had an urge to pay drummers \$10 to follow him to the home of the most notorious Copperhead in the city, Marcellus Emery, the editor of the *Bangor Democrat*.¹⁰⁹ A crowd went to the *Bangor Democrat's* office and threatened to break in, but their violence was withheld by a promise that the Union flag would be hung from the office all day. The throng went to the homes and offices of other Copperheads in the city and made them hang up the stars and stripes, or face destruction of their property. A committee of loyal Union men was formed and deliberately contemplated the lynching of one man who refused to comply with the orders of the mob.¹¹⁰

A carriage raced from Bangor to Ellsworth to spread the news, and soon, old men were dancing in front of the shops on Main Street there too.¹¹¹ Undoubtedly another carriage delivered the news at last to Mount Desert Island, to similar acclaim. The joy of peace was tempered a few days later by the news of President Lincoln's assassination, and then came a long time of recovery for a generation decimated by the war. Of the seventy-five men from the town of Mount Desert known to have served in the army, at least thirty-six suffered wounds or disease, were captured or killed. Dozens of orphans and widows remained to carve a life out of the rugged coast, without a man's help.

Conclusion

Copperheadism, in the historical record, has been explained largely as a phenomenon of urban, immigrant, and Catholic populations. But Copperheads were abundant in the rural, native, and Protestant population of Down East Maine. Victory for the Union cause was perceived not only as a triumph of military forces over the Confederacy but also as a victory over the war's opponents at home. Throughout Maine, some of the elation of victory was expressed through acts of revenge and humiliation directed at Copperheads. The fact that Copperheads were still around at the war's end is an indication of their obstinance. Opponents of the war had increased their resolve as the war went on, as the casualties mounted, and as the draft threatened to draw into the fight men who wanted no part of it.¹¹²

If it is true, as tradition remembers, that the population of Maine was supportive of the war, it is also true, as tradition has mostly forgot-

ten, that a significant minority was implacably opposed to the war. Many of Maine's soldiers enlisted not only out of patriotism, but with the knowledge that if they did not go voluntarily, they would almost certainly be conscripted and lose all chance at a volunteer's bounty. While forty-four of every thousand Maine soldiers were killed in action or died of wounds, an equal proportion deserted.¹¹³ Some men whose employment took them to sea stayed far from the reach of the authorities until they were certain they were clear of the draft. Others unlucky enough to be drafted "skedaddled" before they were mustered, or feigned illness or intentionally maimed themselves to obtain a medical deferment. Others deserted at the first opportunity, lighting out for Maine's boundless north woods or Canada, many never to return. Indeed, Mount Desert's population fell by six percent between the censuses of 1860 and 1870, a reduction that could not have been caused by war mortality alone. It is possible that some of the population loss was caused by the exodus of men who fled the draft and never came back.¹¹⁴

Although the existence of dissenters in Down East Maine is well-documented, the reasons men objected to and avoided the war are less clear. Most dissenters were probably Democrats, and many may have been influenced by the anti-war press that expressed in fervent polemic the political and moral arguments against the war. Although significant social and peer pressure was applied to drive men towards enlistment, more private and earnest familial and personal priorities pressed to keep them at home. Many men believed their first duty was to support their family, not to coerce the southern states back into the Union or free the slaves of the South.

The history of Maine in the Civil War is told from historical evidence that has survived the century and a half since the conflict. Many of these records of the war were subjected to a social filter that let stories of support for the Union cause pass through to the next generations, while stories of opposition were thought to be better forgotten. Certainly there was a tint of public shame that attended those who avoided the war or opposed it. As the *Ellsworth American* said of the Copperheads in Tremont, "If half is true of what is related of them, their names will go down to posterity reeking with treason and disloyalty."¹¹⁵ One memoirist said that after the war, draft resisters were required to sign a "roll of dishonor," in order to obtain a pardon for their conduct.¹¹⁶

Although records of war opposition were less likely to survive the subsequent years than records of military valor, evidence of active dissent has survived to the present day. Local newspapers, for instance, con-

tain ample evidence of a vigorous debate over the legitimacy and conduct of the war. Ironically, the war's proponents left some of the clearest documentation of dissent. They boasted of the social pressure, intimidation, and violence they exerted upon Copperheads. But the most emphatic opposition to the war was expressed by those who refused to participate in it. Although their voices have largely been removed from the historical record, their absence from the enlistment rolls, their departure from the community during the years of the draft, their willingness to commit fraud or maim themselves or do anything necessary to avoid military service, testify to their personal opposition to the Civil War.

During the course of research for this essay, no records were discovered that indicate men refused to fight because they were conscientious objectors. But many shared the belief expressed in the Copperhead press that abolition was not a cause worth fighting for. There is mixed evidence on the influence of social class. Some prosperous men enlisted or obtained commissions, while others purchased exemptions and substitutes. Some poor men enlisted, seeking to better their financial circumstances in the military, while others avoided service, fearing their departure would leave their families destitute, subject them to confinement and military discipline, and maybe kill or maim them. To such men, whom war supporters labeled cowards or traitors, Copperheadism offered a libertarian defense for their refusal to participate in the war. They preferred to be left alone, even if it meant that the United States would keep the institution of slavery as it was and allow the southern states to leave the Union. When they weighed the personal risks of war, they found political and ethical cover in Copperheadism that was sufficient to justify their refusal.

Notes

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3. John Brobst, quoted in James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 145.
4. For a good historiographical work on Copperheads in the Midwest see Robert H. Abzug, "The Copperheads: Historical Approaches to Civil War Dissent in the Midwest," *Indiana Magazine of History* 66, no. 1 (March 1970): 40-55.

5. Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 1-3.
6. See, for example, Frank L. Klement, "Catholics as Copperheads during the Civil War," *Catholic Historical Review* 80, no. 1 (Jan. 1994): 36-57; Joanna Cowden, "The Politics of Dissent: Civil War Democrats in Connecticut," *New England Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (Dec. 1983): 538-554. Peter Levine has noted that much of the historiography on the Copperhead movement closely corresponds with the official report of the Provost Marshal General's Office, which was published in 1866. Yet, Levine found only a weak correlation with the description of Copperheads in his study of draft evaders, a correlation that got weaker as the war went on. Levine found that, by 1864, men of every description and class were avoiding the draft in similar proportions. See Peter Levine, "Draft Evasion in the North during the Civil War, 1863-1865," *Journal of American History* 67, No. 4, (March 1981): 824-825.
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9. Vining, *Census Records*, pp. 50, 101, 163.
10. *Ellsworth American*, November 9, 1860; November 11, 1861; and November 25, 1864.
11. Abraham Lincoln, "First Inaugural Address," in *Selected Speeches and Writings of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Paperback Classics, 2009), pp. 284-293.
12. *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, June 27, 1861.
13. Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address," in *Selected Speeches and Writings of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Paperback Classics, 2009), pp. 449-450.
14. *Final Report*, p. 160.
15. *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, June 6, 1861.
16. Town of Mount Desert, *Record of 1862*, July 21, 1862.
17. Mount Desert Island Historical Society (hereafter MDIHS), Civil War Database. By the time the war was over, two of the Smith boys would be wounded and one killed.
18. James M. Parker to Letitia Parker, August 10, 1862, MDIHS.
19. R.H. Stanley and George Hall, *Eastern Maine and the Rebellion* (Bangor: R.H. Stanley, 1887), p. 40.
20. *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, July 6, 1861.
21. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, pp. 39-40.
22. James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 493-494.
23. *Machias Union*, September 17, 1861.

24. Jefferson Davis, "Speech at the Portland Convention, August 24, 1858," *Speeches of the Hon. Jefferson Davis of Mississippi: Delivered During the Summer of 1858* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1859), p. 19.
25. *Machias Union*, April 2, 1861.
26. *Machias Union*, April 9, 1861.
27. *Machias Union*, April 23, 1861.
28. *Machias Union*, April 23, 1861; *Machias Union*, April 30, 1861.
29. *Machias Union*, April 30, 1861.
30. *Machias Union*, August 13, 1861.
31. *Machias Union*, October 22, 1861.
32. *Ellsworth American*, November 15, 1861.
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34. *Machias Union*, October 1, 1861.
35. *Ellsworth American*, October 4, 1861.
36. Abraham Lincoln, letter to Erastus Corning, in *The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln*, Philip Van Doren Stern, ed. (New York: The Modern Library, 1999), p. 761.
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38. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, p. 65.
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40. *Machias Union*, August 20, 1861.
41. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, p. 89.
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48. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, p. 172.
49. *Ellsworth American*, August 8, 1862.
50. Levine, "Draft Evasion in the North," pp. 816-817.
51. James M. Parker to Letitia Parker, October 11, 1863, MDIHS.
52. Eben Hamor journal, book no. 1, in the private collection of Raymond Strout and Family.

53. Murray Bowden. "The Problem of Conscription in Maine during the Civil War" (master's thesis, University of Maine, 1948), p. 71.
54. MDIHS, Civil War Database.
55. *Ellsworth American*, September 5, 1862.
56. *Ellsworth American*, October 23, 1863.
57. *Ellsworth American*, September 19, 1862.
58. *Ellsworth American*, September 19, 1862.
59. *Portland Transcript*, September 12, 1862, in Bowden, "The Problem of Conscription," p. 82.
60. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, p. 182.
61. Augustus Stevens to John Hodsdon, August 21, 1862, Adjutant General, War Department, Absent Soldiers 1862, Box 113, Maine State Archives (hereafter MSA), Augusta.
62. Augustus Stevens to John Hodsdon, September 2, 1862, Adjutant General, War Department, Absent Soldiers, MSA.
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64. *Ellsworth American*, November 21, 1862.
65. Bowden, "The Problem of Conscription," p. 26.
66. *Ellsworth American*, October 10, 1862.
67. *Ellsworth American*, December 26, 1862.
68. Bowden, "The Problem of Conscription," pp. 2-4.
69. *Ellsworth American*, February 20, 1863.
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71. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, p. 492.
72. Bowden, "The Problem of Conscription," pp. 30-32.
73. *Ellsworth American*, October 10, 1863.
74. *Ellsworth American*, October 23, 1863.
75. *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier*, July 13, 1863.
76. *Machias Union*, September 1, 1863, quoted in Bowden, "The Problem of Conscription," p. 35.
77. A. D. Bean to John Hodsdon, September 4, 1863, MSA.
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79. *Ellsworth American*, October 30, 1863.
80. *Ellsworth American*, November 20, 1863.
81. *Ellsworth American*, November 27, 1863.
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85. *Ellsworth American*, May 13, 1864.
86. *Ellsworth American*, May 13, 1864.
87. *Ellsworth American*, May 27, 1864; *Ellsworth American*, June 4, 1864.
88. *Ellsworth American*, January 30, 1863.
89. William F. Fox, "The Chances of Being Hit in Battle," *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, May 1888, p. 94.
90. MDIHS, Civil War Database; James M. Parker, Samuel Savage, Elijah Wasgatt, Stillman Smith, and Thomas Savage died during the war. Mark T. Richardson, John A. Rodick, John W. Smith, Bloomfield Richardson, and Charles Southard were wounded.
91. MDIHS, Civil War Database.
92. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, p. 179.
93. *Ellsworth American*, September 30, 1864.
94. Emily Savage to Augustus Savage, March 20, 1865, MDIHS.
95. *Ellsworth American*, April 22, 1864.
96. *Ellsworth American*, May 6, 1864.
97. Emily Savage to Augustus Savage, October 6, 1864, MDIHS; Bowden, "The Problem of Conscription," p. 90.
98. *Machias Union*, February 9, 1864, in Bowden, "The Problem of Conscription," p. 45.
99. Bowden, "The Problem of Conscription," pp. 51-52.
100. Augustus Savage to Emily Savage, July 23, 1864, MDIHS.
101. Augustus Savage to Emily Savage, February 10, 1865, MDIHS.
102. Emily Savage to Augustus Savage, March 27, 1865, MDIHS.
103. Emily Savage to Augustus Savage, March 30, 1865, MDIHS.
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107. *Ellsworth American*, August 5, 1864.
108. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, p. 193.
109. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, p. 193.
110. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, p. 195.
111. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, p. 304.
112. *Final Report*, p. 74.

113. *Final Report*, p. 82.

114. U.S. Census, 1860, Mount Desert Island, Maine; U.S. Census 1870, Mount Desert Island, Maine.

115. *Ellsworth American*, August 8, 1862.

116. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine*, p. 181.