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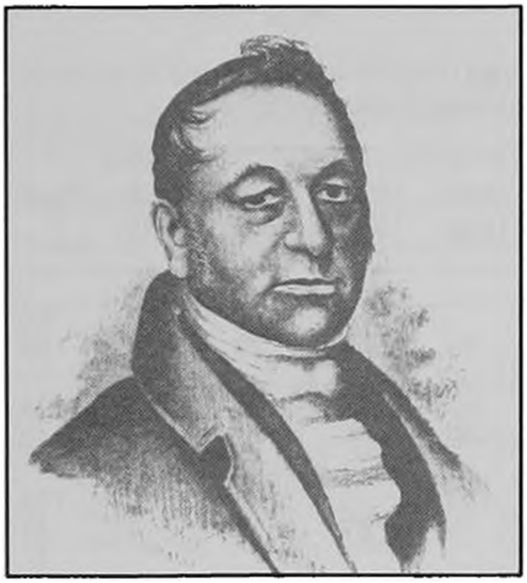
Dale R. Steinhauer

"A CLASS OF MEN'S": UNITED STATES ARMY RECRUITS IN MAINE, 182201860

"For the Army. From 45 to 50 Able-bodied American citizens, from 18 to 35 years of age, are required to complete the four companies of the army which are destined to constitute the Garrison at Houlton Plantation."[1]

With this advertisement in the *Eastern Argus* in the spring of 1828, Captain Greenleaf Dearborn announced the opening of a recruiting rendezvous on Union Street in Portland. Recent incidents along Maine's disputed border with New Brunswick had angered many Downeasters, who felt that protecting the state against external aggression was a matter of honor. The establishment in 1928 of a military post on the northeastern frontier manned by Captain Dearborn's Second Infantry Regiment meant that the army needed a substantial number of Maine recruits. With a crisis threatening on the northeastern border, Dearborn probably hoped to attract spirited patriots anxious to serve and not the usual class of men who enlisted during peacetime.

Officers had come to set their expectations low when they sought soldiers for the peacetime army. Those who offered to serve seemed to be shiftless, signing up because they could find no other employment. Americans elevated the man who took up arms during wartime, yet disparaged the one who joined the ranks in times of peace. Addressing his fellow United States senators in 1826, Maine's General John Chandler expressed this attitude when he described wartime citizen-soldiers as "men who have families and property to defend, men of correct habits." But, to the veteran of the War of Independence and the War of 1812, peacetime soldiers just wanted to earn enough to "supply them with something to drink." With such an abundance of land in the new republic, Chandler believed that only the least ambitious and most unenterprising would be attracted to serve



General John Chandler, hero of Monmouth and member of the U. S. Senate Military Affairs Committee, believed that in a nation blessed with opportunity only the most unenterprising would be attracted to the regular army during peacetime. Cochrane, *History of Monouth and Wales* (1894)

in the ranks of the regular army. Peacetime service would always draw "a class of men" who had "habits and morals not the most correct."[2] People listened when Chandler spoke. Since 1821 he had served on the five-member Senate Military Affairs Committee where he had rubbed shoulders with Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, and Thomas Hart Benton in discussing and making recommendations relating to the nation's tiny standing army of less than six thousand officers and men.[3] Would Captain Dearborn's recruits in Maine fit General Chandler's description, or would they prove more patriotic than men who enlisted elsewhere in the nation?

Records of the regular army, preserved at the National Archives, best answer this question. A systematic search of enlistment registers, muster rolls, and other documents revealed 1,927 Mainers joined the army between 1822 and 1860. An analysis of the information drawn from the registers of enlistment and other army records does not answer all questions about the behavior of men in the rank and file, but it goes far beyond the simple notions of General Chandler.[4]

The means by which the military recruited reveals several characteristics of the average enlisted man. In Maine and elsewhere, the army pursued two kinds of recruitment, one passive in nature and the other active. Passively, military base

Table I
New Recruits Enlisted at Maine Posts: 1822-1860

Post	Regiment	1822-1827	1827-1838	1838-1848	1848-1853	1854-1860	Total
Fort Preble	First Artillery	67		13			80
	Third Artillery		75		29		104
Fort Sullivan	First Artillery	75		63			138
	Third Artillery	1	69		73		143
Hancock Barracks	Second Infantry		104				104
	First Artillery			87			87
Fort Kent	First Artillery			5			5
Kennebec Arsenal	Ordnance		21	26	19	11	77
Total		143	269	194	121	11	738

commanders within the state expected a certain number of walk-in volunteers. (See Table 1.) Posts near the state's most populated urban areas could sometimes meet all of their manpower requirements in this manner. A remote garrison, like

Table II
New Recruits Enlisted at Rendezvous: 1826-1855

Recruiting Station	1826-1832	1837-1841	1845-1848	1853-1855	Total	Percent
Bangor	96	137	306	31	570	47.9%
Portland	132	31	74	9	246	20.7
Eastport	0	36	54	20	110	9.2
Houlton	0	0	50	0	50	4.2
Augusta	12	1	36	0	49	4.1
Other	4	8	153	0	165	13.9
Total	244	213	673	60	1190	
Percent	20.5%	17.9%	56.6%	5.0%		

Hancock Barracks in Houlton, could expect few men from the thinly populated countryside of northern Maine.[5]

The army recruited actively by opening short-term recruiting stations, called rendezvous, in the cities of the state. (See Table 2.) Sometimes the General Recruiting Service operated

Table III
Recruiting Stations and Officers in Maine: 1825-1860
General Recruiting Service (G) -- Regimental Recruiting Service (R)
• Maine-born Recruiting Officers

Period of Recruitment	Rendezvous Location	Recruiting Officer	Service	Men Enlisted
July 1826-Jan. 1827	Augusta	Bainbridge, 2Lt Henry	G	12
Apr. 1828-Jan. 1829	Portland	•Dearborn, Capt Greenleaf	G	84
June - Sep. 1828	Bangor	Russell, 1Lt John B. F.	G	25
Oct. 1829-Nov. 1830	Bangor	Gallagher, 1Lt Joseph S.	G	69
May 1831-Feb. 1832	Portland	Worth, 1Lt Joseph S	G	48
July-Aug. 1837	Portland	McClintock, Capt William	G	11
Dec. 1837-Feb. 1838	Eastport	Childs, Brev Maj Thomas	G	43
Apr. 1839	Bangor	McDowell, 2Lt Irvin	R	11
May-Dec. 1839	Bangor	Hill, 1Lt Bennett	R	49
Oct.-Dec. 1839	Portland	Hill, 1Lt Bennett	R	20
Mar.-Apr. 1840	Bangor	McDowell, 2Lt Irvin	R	23
May-Aug. 1840	Bangor	Magruder, 1Lt John	R	43
Sep. 1840-Feb. 1841	Bangor	misc. officers	R	11
Apr.-July 1845	Bangor	Bowen, 2Lt Isaac	R	25
June-Aug. 1846	Portland	Stevens, 1Lt Isaac I.	R	12
July-Nov. 1846	Bangor	Henry 2Lt James M.	G	50
July-Aug. 1846	Eastport	Rains, Capt Gabriel J.	G	11
July-Dec. 1846	Portland	Hayman, 2Lt Samuel B.	G	16
Aug. 1846	Augusta	Scott, 1Lt James R.	G	8
Dec. 1846-May 1847	Bangor	Van Bokkelen, 2Lt William	G	64
June-July 1846	Bangor	•Carlisle, 2Lt Josiah H.	G	16
Mar.-May 1847	Augusta	•Simmons, 2Lt Charles	R	28
Mar.-May 1847	Bangor	•Thompson, LtCol Abner	R	38
Mar.-May 1847	Belfast	•Palmer, 2Lt Alpheus T.	R	31
Mar.-May 1847	Calais	•Swett, 2Lt Nathaniel	R	17
Mar.-May 1847	Eastport	•Morrow, 1Lt Alexander	R	16
Mar.-May 1847	E. Thomaston	Tracy, 1Lt Albert	R	14
Mar.-May 1847	Gardiner	•Bodfish, Capt Charles	R	34
Mar.-Apr. 1847	Norridgewock	•Crosby, 2Lt Thompson	R	9
Apr. 1847	Porter, etc.	•Whitten, 2Lt Edwin A.	R	6
Mar.-Apr. 1847	Saco	•Woodman, Capt Stephen	R	24
May 1847	Portland	Archer, 2Lt James	R	9
June-Oct. 1847	Portland	•Simmons, 2Lt Charles	R	34
Aug. 1847-June 1848	Bangor	Patten, Brev Maj George W.	G	169
July - Aug. 1848	Bangor	•Carpenter, 1Lt Stephen D.	G	18
Apr. 1848-Sep. 1848	Eastport	•Prince, Capt Henry	G	27
May-Dec. 1853	Eastport	Dawson, Capt Samuel	G	20
Apr.-June 1855	Bangor	•Palmer, 1Lt Alpheus T.	R	31
Apr.-June 1855	Portland	Tracy, Capt Albert	R	9

these rendezvous; otherwise they were run by the recruiting services of individual regiments, ordinarily for service within the same region. Between the 1820s and the 1850s, seventeen General Recruiting Service officers and more than twenty regimental service officers enlisted more than one thousand men, roughly three-fifths of all new recruits in Maine.[6] (See Table 3.) Recruiters were most successful during the Mexican War, when their men were bound for service in that foreign conflict. They also brought in a considerable number of men during two short spans of time following the arrival of new regiments at Hancock Barracks: the first after the Second Infantry Regiment arrived in Maine in 1828; the second after the First Artillery Regiment replaced the Second Infantry in 1838.

The army sometimes selected an officer to recruit in Maine on the basis of his connections in the state. Adjutant General Roger Jones, who was responsible for army recruiting, recognized that Captain Dearborn's ties to the state of Maine made him "the most suitable person" for the job.[7] A native of Monmouth, Dearborn was the most senior of the handful of Maine-born officers then serving in the regular army.[8] His wife was the daughter of Allen Gilman, who would later serve as Bangor's first mayor; her mother was Pamela Augusta Dearborn, for whom Maine's present capital was named.[9] The captain and his wife shared a common kinsman in General Henry Dearborn, who was his great-uncle and her grandfather. A hero of the Battle of Monmouth (for which the Maine town was named) in the War of Independence, General Dearborn had served as Thomas Jefferson's secretary of war. In addition to his noted family ties, Captain Dearborn was well connected with another influential citizen of Monmouth: General John Chandler, the ranking United States senator from Maine.

Captain Dearborn was more successful than most recruiters in the decades between statehood and the Civil War. In no other year did Maine provide such a large proportion of all army enlistments as in 1828. The captain's eighty-four recruits, together with those who joined at Bangor and at the state's posts, accounted for 6.6 percent of all Americans who enlisted that

George W. Patten, "the Poet Laureate of the Army," established a recruiting office in Bangor and carried his search for soldiers from Belfast to Houlton. Photo courtsy Charlotte Schachter.

year. Otherwise, Maine's proportion of all enlistments only rose above 2 percent in 1829, 1830, 1831, 1838, and during the Mexican War.

Brevet Major George W. Patten was the only officer who brought in more men in Maine than Captain Dearborn. In the last months of the Mexican War, Patten boarded on Hammond Street in Bangor and carried his search for potential soldiers from Belfast to Houlton. A native of Rhode Island, the major had served at Hancock Barracks from 1833 to 1836, when he was a lieutenant serving under Captain Dearborn. While at Houlton, Patten married a Maine woman. Having had part of his left hand shot off at Cerro Gordo, the Mexican War hero presented a grim reminder of the costs of war to prospective soldiers. Still, he was able to bring in a monthly average of about fifteen men in nearly a year of recruiting. Sometimes referred to as the poet laureate of the army, he found time to contribute poetry to the Bangor *Whig and Courier*, serve as president of the Benevolent Temperance Brothers, and speak on such occasions as the Fireman's Parade.[10] After his retirement from the army, Patten moved to Maine and spent his last years in Houlton.

The effectiveness of the rendezvous, whether staffed by a native of Maine or another officer, often depended on the degree to which other forms of employment competed for potential recruits. In 1831 Portland was considered a good recruiting site because the area had "no rail road or other public works in progress." Eastport offered similar prospects in 1837 "as the labourers on the rail road at Calais will soon be discharged." Ever attentive to the ups and downs of the job market, Adjutant General Roger Jones encouraged the First Artillery Regiment to open rendezvous at Bangor and Augusta in 1839 because a large number of Mainers "have been thrown out of employment."[11]

No officer could run a rendezvous alone. Captain Dearborn could interview and examine men, but he relied on enlisted men to assist him by stirring up interest in army service at the grass-roots level and by providing a taste of military drill and discipline to encourage recruits. When Dearborn first traveled from Boston to Portland to open the new rendezvous, he brought with him Sergeant William W. Burns, an experienced non-commissioned officer who had served in the War of 1812. Dearborn's respect for the old soldier is reflected in a letter of recommendation that he wrote for him in 1832: "intelligent, perfectly temperate, and writes a good hand."[12] Dearborn also selected two men from Monmouth, Corporal James Madison Chandler and Sergeant Hendrick Judkins, to serve as non-commissioned officers at the recruiting station. Most recruiting stations also had musicians. A drummer and a fifer marching through a city or town could expect to draw a crowd. Add an erect and correct soldier in a smart uniform, and this small parade could evoke the admiration of young men and boys.

Regulations published in 1825 provided guidelines establishing who was eligible to enter the service.[13] First, each man had to be between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five, with those under the age of twenty-one requiring the consent of a parent or guardian. In addition, the army recruited boys, some as young as ten years, to serve as musicians.

The enlistment of minors who misrepresented their age was a perpetual problem for the army in this period. The recruiter was in a difficult position, not knowing whether to reject a prospect on the basis of his youthful appearance or trust his seeming exaggeration of his age. The army often did not detect an underaged soldier until an angry parent sought the wayward son's discharge through a habeas corpus issued by civil authorities. The median age of Captain Dearborn's enlistees was twenty-five and, aside from one minor who enlisted as a musician, each of his recruits gave his age as twenty-one or above. Three were discharged after their minority had been established by sworn statements.

While the age requirement remained the same throughout the antebellum period, the height standard changed several times. The 1825 regulations stated that an infantry recruit should be at least five feet six inches in height and an artillery recruit at least five feet eight inches. By the eve of the Civil War, the minimum height had fallen to five feet three inches for all branches of the army.[14] Captain Dearborn's enlistees averaged about five feet seven and one-quarter inches, while the average for Maine recruits in the four decades leading up to the Civil War was about five feet eight inches.[15]

Although the regulations of 1825 were silent on the recruit's marital status, the army discouraged the enlistment of married men. Like parents seeking the discharge of a minor son, the army also received letters from the distraught spouse trying to obtain discharge for her husband. One of Captain Dearborn's first recruits, Benjamin G. Dame, had a wife and five children, the oldest being just ten. When his wife heard of his enlistment, she appealed to the adjutant general for her husband's release from the service, stressing "the helpless state of my little ones."[16] The army promptly discharged the man. Later regulations required that a recruiting officer obtain permission from the adjutant general before enlisting in peacetime any new recruit who had a wife or child.[17]

The 1825 regulations further required that each recruit be "able bodied, active, and free from disease."[18] By 1861 this requirement had been expanded to "effective, able-bodied, sober, free from disease, of good character and habits, and with a competent knowledge of the English language."[19] Probably one-third of those who offered themselves for enlistment were rejected, usually because of physical defects or for being under age. The physical examination of recruits sometimes fell to the recruiting officer, but usually an army surgeon or a hired physician from the community handled that responsibility. Captain Dearborn relied on the services of Joseph Eaton and Sylvester Day, assistant surgeons assigned to nearby Fort Preble. These doctors commonly rejected men for having varicose veins, a broken-down constitution, a hernia, or the appearance of intemperance.[20] Reports of special boards of examiners at the recruits' permanent posts reveal that doctors and recruiting officers sometimes turned a blind eye to obvious health problems.

The regulations of 1825 broke with earlier standards for recruits in that they rejected the immigrant who sought to enlist in the army.[21] The army believed that native-born Americans made more faithful soldiers and had more useful skills, but difficulties in filling the ranks with native-born recruits forced the army to again open its doors to the foreign-born in September 1828.[22] Looking at Dearborn's Portland recruits before and after that date shows how dramatic the change was: of the fifty-five men who enlisted between April and August, all were American-born; of the twenty-nine who entered the army in the last four months of the rendezvous, only eleven were born in the United States.

While the foreign-born constituted only a tiny fraction of Maine's population, they came to represent a disproportionately large share of the recruits in the state between 1822 and 1860. Immigrants represented less than 6 percent of the state's population in 1850, but just under half of the antebellum enlistees in Maine were foreign born.[23] (See Table 4.) In one sense the composition of the Maine recruits came close to reflecting those of the rest of the nation: the army-wide proportion of foreign-born enlistments rose from about one in three or four in the years just after 1828 to about two out of three in the 1850s. In another sense Maine was out of step: no state north of the Mason-Dixon line had a lower percentage of foreign-born in its population than did Maine. The recruits of New York City, where 47.6 percent of the population was foreign-born in 1860, came closer

Table IV
Birthplaces of Maine Recruits by Time Frame: 1822-1860
(Percent)

Birthplace	1822-1827	1828-1838	1839-1845	1846-1847	1848-1860	Total
N	155	559	355	495	359	1923
Maine	20.6%	35.4%	37.7%	60.2%	18.7%	37.9%
Other New England	20.6	14.0	6.8	5.5	2.2	8.8
Other States	9.0	5.7	6.2	3.8	2.2	4.9
Total Native-Born	50.3	55.1	50.7	69.5	23.1	51.6
Ireland	33.5%	30.2%	32.4%	19.8%	54.6%	32.8%
England	7.1	5.7	5.9	5.1	8.4	6.2
British America	5.8	3.9	6.8	4.2	8.4	5.5
Other Foreign	3.2	5.0	4.2	1.4	5.6	3.9
Total Foreign-Born	49.7	44.9	49.3	30.5	76.9	48.4

to reflecting the ethnic composition of that city than those of Portland, where only 14.8 percent were immigrants.[24] While many Mainers regarded the new immigrants in Portland, Bangor, and elsewhere with a disapproving eye, the foreign-born were readily accepted into the army, where they usually received more even treatment than they did in civilian life. On the other hand, the rising proportion of immigrants and Catholics seems to have repelled many native-born, Protestant Americans who neither desired to be in the company of Irish Catholics or Germans nor approved of serving under foreign-born non-commissioned officers.

If the prospective soldier, American or foreign born, met the army's standards for age, height, and marital status, then survived an interview with the recruiting officer and an examination by a physician, he was ready to be sworn into the service for a term of five years, although the period was briefly reduced to three years during the 1830s. Compared to most other standing armies of the western nations, the five-year commitment was relatively short. A British soldier in that period enlisted to serve seven years, fourteen years, or for life.[25]

Most soldiers who entered the army in Maine did not complete their terms of enlistment. Only seventeen of Captain Dearborn's recruits served for five full years. Of course, the army discharged some for being underage or married, but these were just two doors leading out of the service. Poor health and injuries left many soldiers disabled and unfit for further service. Those Downeasters who served outside New England often suffered from the illnesses that plagued areas with warmer climates, particularly during the Mexican War, and many died. Comparatively, Maine was a healthy place to serve, and only one of Dearborn's recruits died during his term of service at Houlton. Throughout the decades before the Civil War, the battlefield claimed only a tiny portion of the rank and file compared with disease.

The service of Captain Dearborn's troops ended in a variety of other ways. Civil authorities seized one soldier after charging him with theft. Two other soldiers were dishonorably discharged in accordance with sentences passed by courts martial. At this time a soldier could also obtain a discharge by finding a substitute or paying the sum of twenty-five dollars, though none of Dearborn's men secured these types of discharge.

Clearly, the most common means of ending a soldier's service was desertion. (See Table 5.) Of Captain Dearborn's eighty-four recruits, forty-eight ended their service by deserting. Interestingly, the two periods when a crisis on Maine's northeastern border should have inspired faithful and patriotic service demonstrated even higher levels of desertion. Of those who joined at General Recruiting Service rendezvous between 1828 and 1831 to serve at Hancock Barracks, 60.8 percent ended their service by deserting; of those who enlisted at the First Artillery rendezvous between 1839 and 1841, 54.1 percent deserted. These rates were well above those during normal peacetime service. The low 19.5 percent who deserted from the Ninth Infantry, in which most of Maine's recruits served during the Mexican War, seems minuscule by way of comparison, although it is unfair to judge soldiers signing up for five years by the same

Table V
Mode of Ending Service of Maine Recruits by Time Period: 1822-1860
(Percent)
(excluding those who served at Kennebec Arsenal)

Mode of Ending Service	1822-1827	1828-1838	1839-1845	1846-1847	1848-1860	Total
N	153	538	338	484	323	1836
Deserted	41.8%	47.6%	48.2%	19.2%	44.6%	39.2%
Served Full Term	27.5	32.3	26.6	29.3	22.0	28.3
Died	2.6	5.6	5.0	22.5	9.6	10.4
Disability	9.8	5.4	8.0	7.4	5.0	6.7
Other	12.4	8.4	11.2	12.2	10.5	10.6
Unknown	5.9	0.7	0.9	9.3	8.4	4.8

standard as those whose service — for the duration of the war — amounted to less than a third of that time. The men of the Ninth were also serving with friends from their home communities, where they were apt to return following the war. That nearly 20 percent of the Ninth deserted the army and their old friends is perhaps more shocking than the higher proportion that deserted at other times.

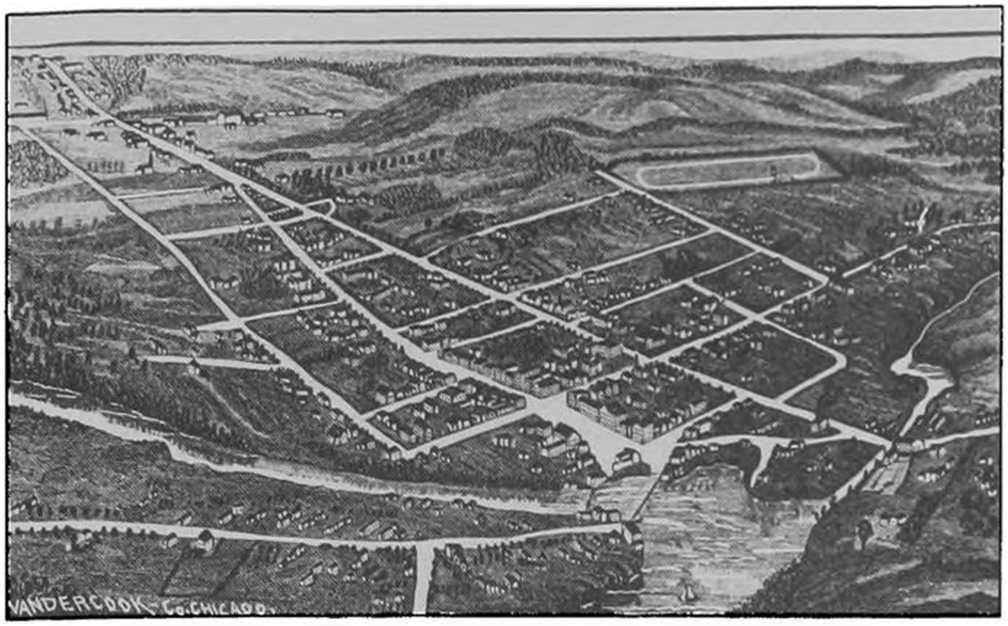
Desertion from border posts was not just a problem for Maine. Fort Niagara in western New York had a rate of desertion that easily surpassed Hancock Barracks and the rest of the army in 1829 and 1830.[26] In 1840 Great Britain's secretary of war explained that desertions from the British army in Canada were common because of alluring high wages and "the exaggerated representations that were put forth of the ease and luxury enjoyed by the laborer in America." In one year, a third of two thousand enlisted men in Canada deserted.[27] At least some deserters from the Union Jack later enlisted in the United States Army, although the adjutant general vigorously sought to prevent this practice. A British visitor to Hancock Barracks in 1838 reported that the American ranks at the post included many deserters from Great Britain's army.[28]

While desertion was not exclusively an American problem, neither was it confined to the antebellum period. The remoteness of northern Maine and the proximity of New Brunswick offered a tempting escape for many men who did not want to fight in the Civil War. In 1863 an observer remarked that "Aroostook County has had within her borders more deserters than any other section of the country in either this or the old world."[29] On the New Brunswick side of the line near Eastport, Civil War draft dodgers formed a settlement that came to be known as "Skedaddle Ridge."[30]

The frequency of desertion raises questions about its meaning in the antebellum United States. Today, few consider desertion an acceptable means of ending military service. Notions of reputation, honor, and self-respect are sufficient to restrain many soldiers, while others fear almost certain punishment. The army in Captain Dearborn's time tried to convey the seriousness of the crime to the rank and file, but public opinion looked with greater sympathy on the deserter and punishment was more restrained.

Company commanders, who sometimes saw a third of their men desert in a year, complained bitterly of ineffective legal modes of preventing desertions. During the 1820s, convicted deserters usually served long terms of confinement at hard labor with a ball and chain. Others suffered the humiliation of being drummed out of the service, their heads shaved, all of their military buttons removed, and often a straw halter placed around their necks. To keep a discharged deserter from serving in the army again, courts martial often ordered that these dishonorably discharged soldiers be tattooed with the letter "D" for deserted, usually on the hip or thigh. After being found guilty of deserting while posted as a sentinel, one soldier in Captain Dearborn's company at Hancock Barracks was sentenced to be tattooed with the letter "D" on his forehead. Higher authorities overturned this portion of his punishment.[31]

Under pressure from disgruntled officers, Congress agreed in 1833 to allow the flogging of convicted deserters.[32] This and other punitive measures apparently had only a modest effect in deterring desertion. Some soldiers viewed with horror a flogging with a cat-o'-nine-tails or a rawhide, but others endured their "stripes" as a show of manliness. Most soldiers were undoubtedly aware of the unfairness in punishing the small portion who


VANDERCOOK & Co. CHICAGO.

As a border state, Maine suffered more than the usual number of desertions from the Army. Hancock Barracks, located on the outskirts of Houlton (just off the upper left corner in this view) was an example: disgruntled soldiers had only to walk a mile and a half to the border, where they slipped into official oblivion. *History of the Town of Houlton* (1884).

were apprehended, when most successfully escaped the army. Not until 1861 did Congress abolish flogging as a punishment for desertion from the army.[33]

Contemporaries offered numerous explanations for the high rate of desertion in the regular army. Some saw the fault in the recruiting process and the poor quality of men attracted to the service. They believed that the army could only solve its problem by successfully drawing in better men. Others felt that the army should simply enforce stricter control over the men that it already had. Some argued for still harsher punishment for military crimes, while others advocated temperance reforms and the provision of chaplains. Many friends of the soldier saw solutions in improving the soldier's environment, increasing his pay, and motivating him by opening paths to promotion.

In Maine's case, most recognized that location as a border state contributed to the problem of desertion. The soldier who served at posts situated on Maine's border with New Brunswick could easily escape from the army. Though parties of soldiers often pursued deserters well into British territory and offered rewards to those who brought them back, only a few of the men were apprehended. When the inspector general visited Hancock Barracks in May 1830, he observed that it probably had more desertions than any other post, and placed much of the blame on its proximity to the border.[34] A disgruntled soldier had but a downhill walk of a mile and a half from the post to the border, where he could stop at Shepard Cary's store for a dose of liquid courage before continuing on his way. A deserting soldier left behind a thinly settled frontier in northern Maine and moved into older and more densely populated settlements around the town of Woodstock on the St. John River.

Few would have deserted had they lacked knowledge of ample opportunities for employment beyond the reach of their pursuers. One corporal at Hancock Barracks was court-martialed for encouraging soldiers to desert by speaking glowingly of "the great chance there was for lumbering in the Province of New Brunswick."[35] After visiting Fort Sullivan in 1830, the inspector general reported that the post's deserters "were doubtless from among the number of those scoundrels who...enlist with no other view than to obtain subsistence until better times present themselves."[37] The inspector general wrote that desertions from Hancock Barracks arose in part because many of the enlisted men were from Maine and the British provinces. They were "consequently well acquainted with the country, and people, and from previous occupations, prepared to offer themselves as fishermen or lumberers, and perhaps to former employers." He recommended that the Maine posts draw their recruits from outside the state, and that the army send Maine recruits to the southern and western frontiers. The subsequent change of policy served to reduce markedly the number of desertions at Hancock Barracks after 1830.

Another factor that may have contributed to the high rate of desertion was a misconception concerning duties. If many of the recruits expected to be bearing arms in the defense of Maine's claim to the disputed territory, they were disappointed to find themselves armed with shovels and assigned the mundane task of building the military road that was to connect Hancock Barracks with the settled portion of the state. Each soldier working on the road was entitled to an additional fifteen cents a day and two ounces of whiskey – a small reward for the arduous work.

Besides the circumstances peculiar to Maine, a variety of other more general dissatisfactions contributed to desertion. New recruits have always experienced difficulties in adapting to the rigors of military discipline. Tyrannical officers sometimes made adjustment impossible, while rough treatment by the recruit's peers in the ranks sometimes made life even more unbearable. Others found service in the peacetime army impossibly dull. Urban recruits discovered few amusements and little female companionship at frontier posts or in neighboring communities. Only the rare soldier harbored no second thoughts about committing five years of his life to such a low-paying and thankless job.

The roots of the problem of desertion, however, lay in popular attitudes that discouraged men from enlisting and held in contempt those who did enter the ranks of the regular army. Speaking to his colleagues in the United States House of Representatives, Shepard Cary complained that the discharged soldier "was looked upon as a degraded being, and was as much avoided as if he had been just discharged from the penitentiary."[38] A permanent standing army was at odds with the prevailing republican ideology and democratic spirit of the age. The nation had been reluctant to authorize a professional army, and a frugal Congress kept the force small. Republican ideology endorsed volunteer practices; many, like General Chandler, held that the patriotic volunteer or militiaman was superior to his counterpart in the regular army. The citizen-soldier was a productive American who took up arms during times of national peril and then returned to his employment when peace returned. Volunteer forces had a greater semblance of democracy, with the men often electing their officers and thus narrowing the gap between the rank and file and the officer corps.

An inveterate Democrat, U.S. Representative Shepard Cary of Houlton assailed the elitist notions prevailing in the general view of the Army. The discharged soldier, he claimed, was "looked upon ... as if he had been just discharged from the penitentiary." Photo courtesy of the Aroostook Historical and Art Museum.

The regular army, on the other hand, was perceived as the victim of tyrannical and brutal officers with little concern for their men. At first glance, this may seem out of step with contemporary American democratic ideals. But many Americans approved of an army stratified by rank. Officers and noncommissioned officers, Senator Robert Hayne of South Carolina argued in 1828, were "taken from different classes of society" and had "different habits and manners" – a notion General Chandler endorsed enthusiastically.[39] In effect they were saying that even the best of men in the ranks would never be proper material for the officer corps. Not only were there at least two classes, but the line between the two was rigidly drawn. Still, the very surnames of many of the soldiers who enlisted in Maine suggest that they were cut from the same cloth as those who saw them as inferior. James Madison Chandler, a native of Monmouth and Captain Dearborn's first recruit, was surely a relative of General Chandler. Likewise, Daniel G. Dearborn, another native of Monmouth who enlisted at Bangor in 1830, was certainly a kinsman of Captain Dearborn.

Congressman Shepard Cary, an inveterate Jacksonian, took an egalitarian position, criticizing the army's system that all but prevented qualified enlisted men from winning commissions: "Every soldier who now enlists ... [is] forever debarred from the

Warren L. Lothrop of Leeds, Maine, was among the few inlisted men commissioned as officers between 1815 and 1860. Stinchfield, *History of Leeds* (n.d.).

possibility of rising to distinction. The door of promotion ... [is] closed against him, and he [is] kept in the army as a mere machine and servant of the privileged classes who get commissions through a West Point education."[40] Indeed, examples of political influence in securing West Point commissions abounded in the Congressman's home state; a few years earlier General Chandler had appealed directly to President Van Buren to secure an appointment to West Point for his sixteen-year-old grandson.[41] Only about one hundred enlisted men were commissioned second lieutenants between 1815 and 1860, and of these only two were from Maine: Warren Lothrop and Josiah Chadbourne, both of whom enlisted into the new company of engineers in 1846.[42] The Age of the Common Man had come, but it did not reach the common man in the ranks of the army.

If enlisted men were drawn from a separate class, what were the characteristics of this group? Alexis De Tocqueville described an army in a democracy as "a little nation apart," peopled by men with "a lower standard of intelligence and rougher habits than the nation at large."[43] After 1828 the immigrant came to be the stereotypical recruit. The newcomers to America were poorer, less skilled in their work, more likely to be illiterate, and more apt to get in trouble with the law than their native-born counterparts. They were also often Catholic in a

Protestant nation and second-class citizens in an age that often espoused the cant of egalitarianism, but increasingly practiced a discriminating nativism.

When General Chandler stated that the sort of person who entered the army belonged to a distinct class, he suggested that this class was distinguished by its habits and morals. The senator did not draw his class lines on the basis of wealth or occupation; he had begun his adult life in poverty. Instead he seems to have been pointing his finger at those who used alcohol in excess. But even General Chandler had operated a tavern in earlier times, and if the typical soldier of the 1820s was a tippler, so were most of his countrymen. The average male drank one-half pint of distilled spirits each day, prompting one historian to refer to America of the early nineteenth century as "a nation of drunkards."[44] While artisans and laborers regularly consumed whiskey or rum on the job, the army provided each soldier with a quarter of a pint of spirits each day. Many sought to escape the boredom of garrison life through drinking, and some inevitably became alcoholics. Lieutenant Joseph S. Gallagher, who served with Captain Dearborn, described one company at Hancock Barracks as consisting of thirty-five men, twenty-nine of whom were "drunkards."[45] Gallagher felt that consumption of spirits contributed to a majority of desertions. According to Major Newman Clarke, the commander of Hancock Barracks, "designing individuals from the other side" frequented the same grog shops as his men and encouraged them to desert while the hapless soldiers were "under the strong excitement produced by intoxication."[46]

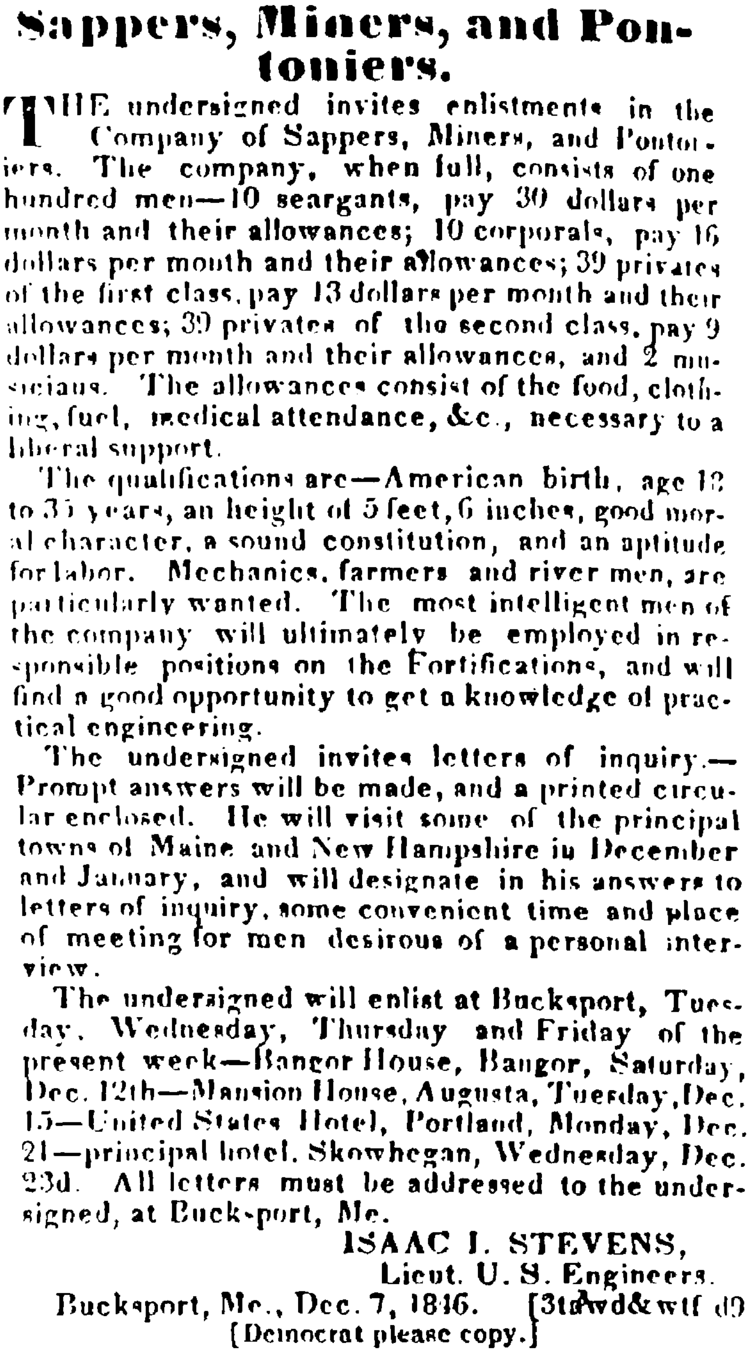
As the temperance movement grew in the late 1820s, the intoxicated army became a matter of public concern. In 1829 the Maine legislature passed a law prohibiting the sale of liquor to a soldier within five miles of a military post.[47] Four years later the army abolished the liquor ration, except for soldiers on fatigue duty.[48] At the same time, the army put added pressure on soldiers whose intoxication interfered with their duty. While the army tolerated the occasional spree, it increasingly moved towards trying the "habitual drunkard" for unsoldierlike conduct or conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline. Only where the commanding officer tolerated it did the army remain a haven for the soldier who was regularly intoxicated.

The records of courts martial reveal that drunkenness did not end with these changes. Local traders were innovative in devising ways to keep the thirsty soldier well supplied with spirits. Shepard Cary may have located his store just over the line in New Brunswick as a ploy to circumvent the Maine law limiting the sale of spirits near army posts. The new recruit did not have to look far to see examples of prolonged and excessive use of alcohol. Facing a court-martial panel, one of Captain Dearborn's men described his sad condition: "a strong constitution broken, body emaciated, and habits destroyed and metamorphosed by sixteen years of service in the Army."[49]

But this old soldier was a relic from another era in a changing army. The mother of Corporal James Jewett, another soldier in Captain Dearborn's company, described her prodigal son's reformation after his enlistment. Her son, she wrote, "began to choose for his associates men of loose and unprincipled habits." As time passed, "his appetite for ardent spirits began to increase," and he became "loose in his morals and less inclined to reading and reflection." Following the advice of "unwise councellors [sic]," he enlisted in the army in 1830. Two and one half years later she could report that he had abstained from spirits for eighteen months and that he was a member of a temperance society at Hancock Barracks.[50] As early as 1834 a temperance society was organized at Fort Sullivan.[51] Four years later at Hancock Barracks, two-thirds of the officers and men of the newly arrived First Artillery Regiment were members of the post's temperance society.[52] While the influence of these groups may have waxed and waned over time, a significant portion — perhaps a majority — of the rank and file, like their counterparts in the private workplace, had sworn off whiskey.

The picture that emerged of the typical army recruit is that of one who probably differed little from John Chandler at the age of twenty-one, when he could scarcely make ends meet. Chandler did not join the peacetime military, but thousands of

Recruiting Advertisement
Bangor Whig and Courier
December 1846



Sappers, Miners, and Pontoniers.

THE undersigned invites enlistments in the Company of Sappers, Miners, and Pontoniers. The company, when full, consists of one hundred men—10 seargants, pay 30 dollars per month and their allowances; 10 corporals, pay 16 dollars per month and their allowances; 39 privates of the first class, pay 13 dollars per month and their allowances; 39 privates of the second class, pay 9 dollars per month and their allowances, and 2 musicians. The allowances consist of the food, clothing, fuel, medical attendance, &c., necessary to a liberal support.

The qualifications are—American birth, age 18 to 35 years, an height of 5 feet, 6 inches, good moral character, a sound constitution, and an aptitude for labor. Mechanics, farmers and river men, are particularly wanted. The most intelligent men of the company will ultimately be employed in responsible positions on the Fortifications, and will find a good opportunity to get a knowledge of practical engineering.

The undersigned invites letters of inquiry.—Prompt answers will be made, and a printed circular enclosed. He will visit some of the principal towns of Maine and New Hampshire in December and January, and will designate in his answers to letters of inquiry, some convenient time and place of meeting for men desirous of a personal interview.

The undersigned will enlist at Bucksport, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of the present week—Bangor House, Bangor, Saturday, Dec. 12th—Mansion House, Augusta, Tuesday, Dec. 15—United States Hotel, Portland, Monday, Dec. 21—principal hotel, Skowhegan, Wednesday, Dec. 23d. All letters must be addressed to the undersigned, at Bucksport, Me.

ISAAC I. STEVENS,
Lieut. U. S. Engineers.

Bucksport, Me., Dec. 7, 1846. [3tdwd&wtf d9

[Democrat please copy.]

Americans did. Often driven by poverty or unemployment, the recruit chose to enlist because the army provided immediate employment, shelter, food, and clothing. That he was typically a person who had already left his place of birth often meant that he was inclined to improve his condition. Once in the army, he found the discipline harsh and the pay meager. The general public viewed him with contempt, and the establishment offered few opportunities to improve his condition. For the impatient and unhappy young man, the five-year term of enlistment seemed an eternity. Knowing that the army was able to apprehend few deserters and learning of possibilities of making a much better living, the soldier left for brighter prospects.

Still commanding "K" Company of the Second Infantry, Captain Dearborn departed from Maine for Florida and the Seminole War in February 1836. While we can only speculate on his thoughts as he left Hancock Barracks after seven years, Dearborn must have felt some disappointment. If he had thought that Downeasters would bring a new spirit to his company, his experience had taught him otherwise. In the end, Maine recruiting had contributed only two men to his departing company of forty-five enlisted soldiers. The rest of his men had joined in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and cities in New York. More than half were foreign-born.

The army had set out with high hopes when it sought recruits in Maine, but after the disappointments that came between 1828 and 1831, it turned to more promising locations. The army did return to Maine sporadically, but only rarely with noteworthy success. As agriculture and lumbering entered difficult times in Maine, enterprising young men left the state in search of greener pastures in Boston, the Midwest, or California. Fewer of the displaced sons of the state remained behind to serve as prey for recruiters. When the army did seek men in Maine, it found the Irish and other immigrants the most anxious to serve, just as they were throughout the rest of the nation. Coming from nations where there were large regular armies, the immigrant probably had no objection to the notion of a standing army and had a much better idea of what being a disciplined soldier meant. Though he may have joined because of poverty and inability to find work, he was less apt to see military service as something undesirable. Once in the army, the Irish or German soldier may have encountered officers who disliked foreigners, but rarely did this stand in the way of his advancement from the rank of private to corporal and sergeant. If the native-born soldier found the army a cruel and undemocratic environment, the newcomer to America found it more hospitable.

The army was Tocqueville's "little nation apart" only in the sense that its men were drawn from less privileged elements in American society. It was not, like an island, beyond the influence of society. Sympathetic to the unfortunate soldier and ready to see him as a victim in an undemocratic army, some Jacksonian Democrats seemed to be prepared to excuse desertion as an acceptable response to an intolerable situation. On the other extreme were those who saw the soldier as society's ne'er-do-well, who would of course be prone to flee from responsibility. Exposed to these public perceptions, nearly half of Maine recruits who enlisted for terms of three or five years responded by deserting.

The antebellum regular army was not a "little nation apart." It was, sometimes unconsciously, shaped and driven by American ideals and prejudices. The army had to perform its duties at a time when the general public held the soldier in contempt and viewed with suspicion the peacetime establishment. Shepard Cary recognized the unfairness of this popular judgment of the enlisted man, while the attitudes of Senator John Chandler served only to foster desertion. Captain Dearborn's recruits for Hancock Barracks fell short of his expectations because they were mere products of the times. When common soldiers were later held in high esteem during the Civil War, their performance matched their favorable reputation. The heroes of that war were again mere products of a time when the public looked with respect on the man in uniform.

NOTES

[1] *Eastern Argus* (Portland, Maine), May 23, 1828.

[2] *Abridgement of the Debates of Congress*, 19th Cong. 1 sess, January 12, 1826.

[3] Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1875), vol 8, p. 495.

[4] Registers of Enlistment of the U.S. Army, 1798-1914 (National Archives Microfilm M233, rolls 18-28); Records of the Adjutant General, Record Group 94, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (henceforth referred to as RG 94 and the Adjutant General as AG); Regular Army Muster Rolls, Inspection Returns, 1821-1860, RG 94. (The contents of Box 212 include muster rolls from Maine recruiting stations.)

[5] Monthly returns from Fort Fairfield, Kennebec Arsenal, Fort Kent, Hancock Barracks, Fort Preble, and Fort Sullivan, National Archives Microfilm M617, rolls 357, 568, 571, 617, 959, 1235-36; Returns from United States Army Military Posts, 1800-1916, RG 94.

[6] The information in this table is drawn primarily from the enlistment registers, where the name of the recruiting officer is supplied in a separate column next to the place of enlistment.

[7] AG Roger Jones to Lt. Col. Willoughby Morgan, Supervisor, Eastern Department, General Recruiting Service, March 27, 1828, Recruiting Service Letter Book, 1825-1833, p. 73, RG 94.

[8] *A Register of Officers and Agents, Civil, Military, and Naval, in the Service of the United States, on the 30th of September, 1829* (Washington: William A. Davis, 1930) lists seven Maine-born officers, including two who had not yet graduated from West Point when Dearborn opened his rendezvous in Maine. Because Maine was part of Massachusetts when some of these officers were born (Dearborn, for instance), it is difficult to determine with absolute certainty whether or not some of the officers were from Maine or Massachusetts.

[9] Federal Writers' Project, *Maine: A Guide 'Down East'* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1937), p. 119. This source states that this

is only "one interpretation" of how Augusta acquired its name, but it offers no other.

[10] *Bangor Directory* (1847); Philip D. Jordan, "George W. Patten: Poet Laureate of the Army," *Journal of the Military Institute* 4 (Fall 1940): 162-67; *Bangor Whig and Courier* July 7, October 15, 25, 1847, January 14, August 7, 9, 1848.

[11] Lt. Col. J.H. Vose, Superintendent, General Recruiting Service, to AG Roger Jones, May 4, 1831, National Archives Microfilm M567, roll 2797, letters received by the AG, 1822-1860, RG 94; Brevet Major Thomas Childs to AG Roger Jones, October 2, 1837, National Archives Microfilm M567, roll 139, letters received by the AG, RG 94; AG Roger Jones to Brevet Lieut. Col. Benjamin K. Pierce, April 4, 1839, Recruiting Service letter book, 1825-1833, p. 222, RG 94.

[12] Captain Greenleaf Dearborn to the AG, October 9, 1832, National Archives Microfilm M567, roll 67, letters received by the AG, 1822-1860, RG 94.

[13] *General Regulations for the Army* (Washington: Davis & Force, 1825), para. 1267.

[14] *Regulations of the Army of the United States, 1861* (New York: Harper, 1861), para. 929.

[15] Benjamin Apthorp Gould, *Investigations in the Military Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), p. 94.

[16] Abigail Dame to the AG, May 4, 1828, National Archives Microfilm M567, roll 34, letters received by the AG, 1822-1860, RG 94.

[17] *Regulations of the Army of the United States, 1861*, para. 930.

[18] *General Regulations of the Army* (1825), para. 1267.

[19] *Regulations of the Army of the United States, 1861*, para. 929.

[20] Examining surgeons rejected 36.2 percent of applicants for enlistment in 1850 and 1851. In 1852 the army rejected fifty-one potential soldiers who bore a tattooed letter "D" indicating that they were convicted deserters from the American or British army. Richard H. Coolidge, *Statistical Report on the Sickness and Mortality in the Army of the United States* (Washington: Nicholson, 1856), pp. 628-31.

[21] *General Regulations of the Army* (1825), para. 1287.

[22] General Order 43, August 13, 1828, General Orders and Circulars of the War Department and Headquarters of the Army, National Archives Microfilm M1094, roll 3, RG 94.

[23] J.D.B. DeBow, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington, D.C.: R. Armstrong, 1853), pp. xxxvi, xxxviii.

[24] Joseph C.G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington: GPO, 1864), pp. xxxi-xxxii.

[25] "Military Forces of France and Great Britain," *Army and Navy Chronicle* 1 (January 15, 1835): 21-22.

[26] Companies of the Second Infantry Regiment manned Fort Niagara, just as they did Hancock Barracks. In each of the three years from 1829 to 1831, the Second Infantry led all of the army's eleven regiments in number of desertions. While the army as a whole averaged 9.5 desertions per company per year, the Second Infantry averaged 17.9 and Fort Niagara 23.8. Registers of Enlistment in the U.S. Army, 1798-1914, National Archives Microfilm 233, roll 79, RG 94.

[27] "Desertion of Soldiers from the Army in Canada," *Army and Navy Chronicle* 10 (April 23, 1840): 270.

[28] Quote from *United Service Journal* (February 1838), in "Hancock Barracks, Houlton, ME," *Army and Navy Chronicle* 7 (July 5, 1838): 1.

[29] Quoted in John J. Pullen, *The Twentieth Maine: A Volunteer Regiment in the Civil War* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1957), p. 152.

[30] W.S. MacNutt, *New Brunswick: A History, 1784-1867* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1963), p. 398.

[31] Court Martial of Private John Beatty, November 20, 1828, Court Martial File AA8, Records of the Judge Advocate General (Army), RG 153.

[32] *U.S. Statutes at Large*, 4: 647-48.

[33] Ibid., 12: 317.

[34] John E. Wool, Inspection of Hancock Barracks, May 3, 1830, National Archives Microfilm M624, roll 3, Records of the Inspector General, RG 159.

[35] Court Martial of Corporal Ora Holdman, January 23, 1830, Court Martial File AA88, Records of the Judge Advocate General (Army), RG 153.

[36] John E. Wool, Inspection of Fort Sullivan, May 9, 1830, National Archives Microfilm M624, roll 3, RG 159.

[37] Ibid.

[38] *Congressional Globe*, 28th Congress, 2d Session, February 18, 1845, 14: 289-90.

[39] *Register of Debates in Congress* 20th Congress, 1st Session, March 17, 1828, 452.

[40] *Congressional Globe*, 28th Congress, 2d Session, February 18, 1845, 14: 289-90.

[41] John Chandler to President Martin Van Buren, March 23, 1839, U.S. Military Academy Cadet Application Papers, 1805-1866, National Archives Microfilm M688, roll 120, RG 94. John Chandler, Jr., entered West Point in 1840 but, like more than two thirds of those in his class, he did not graduate.

[42] Chadbourne may have won his commission because of family ties to Lieutenant Theodore L. Chadbourne who was killed at Resaca de la Palma and was probably the first American officer who died in action after the declaration of war against Mexico. The latter Chadbourne was a grandson of General Benjamin Lincoln, who served as secretary of war in the last years of the War of Independence.

[43] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. by J.P. Mayer and Max Lerner and translated by George Lawrence (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 624.

[44] W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 1-15.

[45] U.S. 21st Congress, 1st Session, 1929, Doc. 437 (American State Papers no. 19), On the Causes of Desertion.

[46] Major Newman Clarke to Governor Enoch Lincoln, January 8, 1829; papers accompanying a "Bill Regulating Innholders, Retailers and Comon Victuallers," 1829, Maine State Archives.

[47] *Public Acts of the State of Maine Passed by the Ninth Legislature, at its Session Held in January 1829* (Portland: Day & Fraser, 1829), pp. 1190-91. "An Act in Addition to the Several Acts for the

Regulation of Innholders, Retailers and Common Victuallers," February 25, 1829.

[48]General Order 100, November 5, 1832; General Orders and Circulars of the War Department and Headquarters of the Army, National Archives Microfilm M1094, roll 3, RG 94.

[49]Court Martial of Corp. Reuben Howard, 1831, Court Martial File AA161, RG 153.

[50]Polly Jewett to Major General Alexander Macomb, December 13, 1832, Records of the Headquarters of the Army, RG 108.

[51]Thomas Childs, Muster Roll of 'A' Company, Third Artillery Regiment, October 31, 1834, Fort Sullivan, Regular Army Muster Rolls, 1821-1860, RG 94.

[52]"Army Temperance Society," *Army and Navy Chronicle* 8 (March 21 1839), pp. 178-79.

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