

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE CIVIL WAR

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The organized military strength of the State of Maine at the outbreak of the Civil War was not more than the equivalent of a full regiment. It was made up of companies of local militia scattered over the State. These were barely more than paper organizations, and were not armed, equipped, or uniformed for active service. But under the emergency call of the President of Apr. 15, 1861, immediately after the firing upon Sumter, for a regiment of infantry to take the field at once, ten of the existing companies, volunteering, were organized into the 1st Maine Regiment and were mustered into the service of the United States on May 3d, only eighteen days after the issuance of the President's call. Skowhegan, having no such military organization, was not as early in the field as some of her sister towns. But no less patriotic than they, and equally alive to the nation's emergency, her citizens actively began the work of recruiting men for the service. Patriotic meetings were held and the duty of the hour was urged upon everyone.

Enlistments rapidly followed, and a company was soon recruited by Royal B. Stearns, who had been active in the enlistment of men. At its organization, Elbridge G. Savage of Solon was chosen captain, Royal B. Stearns of Skowhegan, 1st lieutenant, and Henry A. Boyce of Skowhegan, 2d lieutenant. Though not composed wholly of Skowhegan men, it was known as the Skowhegan Company, and always retained that designation in the regiment to which it was attached.

While the soldiers awaited orders for muster into the United States service their time was occupied in drill practice. The men were quartered in the three hotels of the town, the Turner House, the Elm House, and the Skowhegan, soon to be renamed the Brewster House. They slept in long rows in the corridors, and stories have come down to us of the fun and frolic which held such high revel that the men had to take turns going out

nights to find a quiet place to get needed sleep. The men were required to attend church in a body on Sundays, and it is related that the ministers, while exhorting them with patriotic ardor to do their duty as brave men and good soldiers, cheered them in the same breath with the comforting assurance that their service was likely to be of short duration, and that they would probably not be required to leave the State. This is probably a true index of the feeling in the North at the time and, as such, it is difficult for us now to understand.

They were shortly ordered to rendezvous at Augusta, and on Monday, May 21, the company paraded the streets for the last time, then marched to the station to take the train. On forming in line in front of the station, they were addressed by Rev. C. F. Allen, after which a copy of the Testament was presented to each man, and a prayer was offered in behalf of the company by Rev. C. Bryant. Capt. Savage briefly responded. Several hundred people were present and the company left amid enthusiastic cheers and the booming of cannon. On June 4th they were mustered into the United States service and assigned to the 3d Maine Regiment of Infantry. On the morning of June 5 the regiment took its departure for Washington, and, on July 21, the men had their first baptism of fire in the Battle of Bull Run.

This was Skowhegan's first contribution to the war. While it is not desired to give distinction to these above other Skowhegan men who, later, as bravely and loyally responded to the Nation's call, it will be of interest to record their names here. The names of the first company from Skowhegan, as printed in the Republican Clarion of May 8, 1863, but rearranged and revised, follow. There are in this list three officers and 94 enlisted men, all of them from Skowhegan except those stated to have been from other towns. Those whose names are starred were not mustered in and had no actual service.

Officers: Capt. Elbridge G. Savage, *Solon*; 1st Lieut. Royal B. Stearns; 2d Lieut. Henry A. Boyce.

Privates: *Edward C. Allen, *William S. Austin, *John C. Bickford, *Charles L. Bigelow, Corydon C. Blagden, Sumner P. Boies, Asa W. Bray, Darius Bunker, *Athens*, Dumont Bun-

ker, *Fairfield*, John C. Burce, *Industry*, George H. Burgess, *Cornville*, Henry H. Chase, *Windsor L. Clark, Amos H. Cole, *Starks*, Augustus H. Cook, *Athens*, *Bracy C. Cromwell.

William L. Dunlap, *Starks*, John H. Durgin, *The Forks*, Joseph Durgin, *The Forks*, Hendrick A. N. Dutton, *Abbott*, Samuel F. Emerson, Danville F. Fish, John L. Fish, *Starks*, George W. Fowler, John H. Gardiner, Samuel L. Gilman, Franklin Grant, *Brighton*, Elwin H. Green, Alpheas Greenleaf, *Starks*, Benjamin L. Greenleaf, *Starks*, Charles C. Grover, Simon F. Grover.

Benjamin H. Hall, *Starks*, Henry C. Hamilton Sr., William H. Hayward, Charles A. Hill, Alonzo Hodgdon, *George B. Hollis, Heman Hunnewell, *Solon*, *Martin V. B. Jones, M. V. B. Judkins, *Athens*, William Keef, *Fairfield*, Warren J. Kincaid, *Cornville*, James A. Later, *John Littlefield Jr., Alsbury Luce, *Norridgewock*.

William H. Macey, William H. Maxim, *Norridgewock*, Charles N. Maxwell, *Canaan*, Samuel S. McDermid, William F. Meader, *Starks*, Anson R. Morrison, Henry Otis, *Bingham*, George R. Packard, *Parkman*, *William B. Parker, *George W. Parlin, James Pierce, *Carratunk*, *Henry W. Priest, John Putnam, *Dead River*, William Putnam, *Dead River*.

James H. Rand, George F. Rich, Dean S. Robinson, *Sebec*, Asa Russell, Charles B. Russell, Frank Sally, *Lexington*, Perley Smith, *Anson*, *Gustavus Spinney, *Starks*, Reuben F. Spinney, *Starks*, Frank C. Squires, *Cornville*, David S. Stevens, *Athens*, George W. Steward, Darius W. Sylvester, Henry P. Symons.

John Tantish Jr., Alfred Taylor, *Norridgewock*, Jonas Taylor, *Norridgewock*, Erastus Thompson, *Solon*, John W. Thompson, *Moscow*, *William H. Thompson, *Andrew Tuttle, Charles F. Tuttle, *Athens*, *Nathan Tuttle, Wilbert Tuttle, *Athens*, John W. Varney, *Fairfield*, *Joseph S. Varney.

*George Weaver, William H. Weston, Young S. Wilson, Luther A. Williams, *Starks*, George S. Wing, *Charles E. Withee, *Norridgewock*, William H. Woodworth, *Smithfield*, Cyrus S. Young, *Athens*.

Asa Russell, a member of this company, was the first Skowhegan man to give his life in defense of his country in the Civil

War. It was in his honor that Russell Post of the Grand Army of the Republic was given its name. The only survivor of the company, so far as known, is Samuel F. Emerson of Skowhegan, now living (1940) at the age of 99.

As reminiscent of the spirit evoked in Skowhegan by the attack upon Sumter, and the feeling of patriotic indignation everywhere aroused in the North by this act of treason and rebellion against the government and the flag on the part of the South, the following is copied from the Republican Clarion of Apr. 24, 1861:

We have never seen our citizens so excited upon any subject as they are upon the present state of National affairs. There is but one feeling among all parties, and that is loyalty to the Union. The ladies fully partake of the war spirit, and during the past week manufactured several large and handsome flags which have been hoisted on the Paper Mill, Skate Factory, and several other places, and on Saturday last Miss Helen Lyon, Mrs. F. P. Littlefield, Mrs. H. K. White, Miss Caroline Owen, Miss Emma Williams, Miss Vianna Brown, and Miss S. Cobb got out the field-piece and fired a salute of 34 guns. If there is any danger of a lack of patriotism on the part of our men (which there is not), there is none on the part of our ladies, and, if our common country requires the services of her sons, her daughters will be found true and lineal descendants of the heroic women of the Revolution. Flags are flying from some 12 or 15 different points in our village, and on Saturday evening, almost by spontaneous action, a large and enthusiastic meeting was held at the Town Hall, and loyal and patriotic speeches were made by Col. A. W. Wildes, H. A. Wyman, Dr. A. A. Mann and W. H. Fuller. On adjourning, three rousing cheers were given for the Union.

The defeat of the Union Army at the Battle of Bull Run, the first major engagement of the war, was a rude awakening to the North. Now fully aroused to the stern reality of war, it became the absorbing and impelling thought of every man to save the Union, and of every community to provide the men and means necessary to that end.

The first ten regiments were raised, subsisted, and wholly fitted at the expense of the State to aid the President in enforcing the laws and maintaining the government. Thereafter, and during the period of the war, all troops were raised under the authority and at the expense of the National government. But not until the call of July 2, 1862, for 300,000 men, was there an apportionment to the different states. Skowhegan's quota under this call was 55 men. Prior to this call, as shown by the

Adjutant General's reports, Skowhegan had furnished 107 men to the organizations already in the field. Following this July call, a public meeting was held in Skowhegan, at which Gen. Howard, still suffering from his wounds, urged the young men to come forward and sustain the government. Other speakers, Rev. George Bullen, Rev. D. B. Randall, J. H. Merrill and J. H. Webster, urged the young men to enlist and avoid the draft which had been ordered if the quotas were not filled by enlistment. The Skowhegan quota was promptly filled by volunteers, and the men assigned to the 16th Regiment then being organized by Col. A. W. Wildes. This regiment was raised under a general order of the Adjutant General of Maine the previous May, and Col. Wildes, at that time an aide on the staff of Gov. Washburn, was commissioned as colonel and was largely instrumental in recruiting men for its ranks.

38 Skowhegan men were recruited for the regiment, and July 26 the town voted to raise \$3800 to be paid in bounties of \$100 to each soldier when he was mustered into U. S. service.

The following were commissioned as company officers: Charles A. Williams, captain, S. Forrest Robinson, 1st lieutenant, William E. Brooks, 1st lieutenant, James H. Malbon, 1st lieutenant. Although closely identified with raising and organizing the regiment, Col. Wildes resigned after a few months' service, on account of physical disability, and does not share the honors of its brilliant fighting record. To his intrepid successor, Col. Charles W. Tilden, belongs the honor of making the regiment famous. To Skowhegan people the story of this regiment, to which so many of her sons belonged, has a sentimental appeal because of the heroic incident of the Gettysburg fight, when, the members of it surrounded and made prisoners by the Confederates, and in danger of losing their colors, Col. Tilden seized the staff and plunging it into the ground broke it in twain, and tearing the flag in strips distributed the strips among the men rather than have the colors fall into the hands of the enemy. The men carried these strips concealed about them while in prison, and many of them may be found in Maine homes today as precious souvenirs of the war.