

Civil War Records: Town of Oyster Bay

Compiled by Town Historian John E. Hammond



Private Jeremiah K. Davis of Locust Valley, one of 124 men from the Town of Oyster Bay who enlisted into the Harris Light Cavalry. See inside for a profile of the Harris Light Cavalry.



RICHARD LaMARCA
Town Clerk

JOHN E. HAMMOND
Town Historian



A Message from
Town Clerk
RICHARD LaMARCA



Dear Genealogy Enthusiast,

The American Civil War (1861-65) was a defining event in our country's history. The entire future of the United States rested on its outcome. Its impact was felt in every community in every state, including the Town of Oyster Bay. Town Supervisor George S. Downing's son, Daniel, was killed at Aldie, Virginia. It was the first time in our nation's history that conscription, or draft, of men into the military was employed. Of the Town's total population of around 8,000, 600 men saw active duty.

This guide is an important tool for genealogists searching for male ancestors who lived in Oyster Bay during the Civil War. It contains both the 1862 and 1864 enrollment lists. The enrollment includes the name, age and occupation of all men between the ages of 18 and 45. The 1862 enrollment has a "remarks" section that includes information about enlistment, unit or exemption, while the 1864 enrollment has a "notes" section that includes status, such as prior military service, exemption or "Alien." The guide also contains a list compiled in 1865 after the war listing the names of those who served, along with their date and place of birth, date enlisted, rank, place of enlistment, bonus received, occupation, names of parents, date and place of discharge, and, in some instances, information regarding such things as imprisonment, cause of death, promotions, etc. In the case of Naval Service, the listings include the name of the vessel served on.

Genealogy continues to be one of the world's most popular avocations. The Town has already published several guides for the serious genealogist: *Birth, Marriage and Death Records 1847-1849*; *Index to Register of Deaths 1881-1920*; and *Historic Cemeteries of Oyster Bay*. *Civil War Records: Town of Oyster Bay* is an important companion piece and will, I am sure, provide important, as well as interesting, information to those whose genealogical research leads them to the Town of Oyster Bay.

Very truly yours,

RICHARD LaMARCA
Town Clerk

Introduction to Civil War Records-Town of Oyster Bay

by John E. Hammond, Oyster Bay Town Historian

When President Lincoln issued a call for volunteers to come forth to aid the Union, the young men of Oyster Bay were among the first to answer the call. Although the population of the entire Town of Oyster Bay was less than 8,000 in 1860, more than 2,000 young men volunteered for service in the war. More than 1,000 served in the 15th Regiment of the New York State Militia. Almost 600 fought in direct combat on the many battlefields from Manassas to Gettysburg, Chancellorsville and the Peninsula campaign. Several young Oyster Bay soldiers were among the forces accepting General Robert E. Lee's surrender at Appomattox in April 1865.

Enlistment drives were a common sight in Oyster Bay during the early part of the Civil War. Usually there was an officer, a small contingent of troops and a band playing patriotic marches to help stir up some excitement. Young men, most of whom had never travelled more than ten miles from where they were born, eagerly stepped forward to volunteer when the enlistment drives passed through the many villages in the town. These young men had been raised hearing stories from their grandfathers about the disastrous August 1776 defeat of the fledgling army of George Washington at the Battle of Long Island at the outset of the Revolutionary War. Oyster Bay suffered seven years of enemy occupation throughout the duration of that war, longer than any other area in the new country.

The Civil War defined us as a people, and there remains great interest among historians and genealogists in the surviving records of that great conflict. The records contained in this publication help us to understand the impact that the Civil War had on the small, rural communities of the Town of Oyster Bay. They can be of great assistance to both the serious historian and genealogist.

This publication began simply with a desire to have the Civil War Veterans List alphabetized, but grew with the addition of some of the lesser known records like the Enrollment Books of 1862 and 1864 and Draft Lists. This was supplemented with some relevant material such as photos, letters, and posters regarding some of the units that Oyster Bay's young men served with during the war.

The Harris Light Cavalry was of particular interest during the compiling of this publication since more Oyster Bay young men served in that unit than in any other. Other units of great interest were the 20th and 26th United States Colored Infantry, which were organized by the Union League Club of New York. Some of the records of these units contained in the Oyster Bay records are believed to be unique, such as the Soldier's Power of Attorney completed by Wait Mitchell, a soldier in the 26th United States Colored Infantry. Mitchell tried to exercise his right as a soldier to vote for the re-election of President Abraham Lincoln at a time when persons of color still did not have the right to vote. It was not within the scope or intent of this publication to provide narratives on all the units that Oyster Bay men served with; there are many reference works that can be consulted for such information.

Great care was taken in the transcription of these records to ensure accuracy as much as possible. However, all of the records were handwritten and, occasionally, some difficulties arose in deciphering some of the handwriting styles. It is the hope of the compiler that this publication will be of some assistance to researchers.

GEORGE S. DOWNING
Supervisor, Town of Oyster Bay
1860-1866, 1875-1880

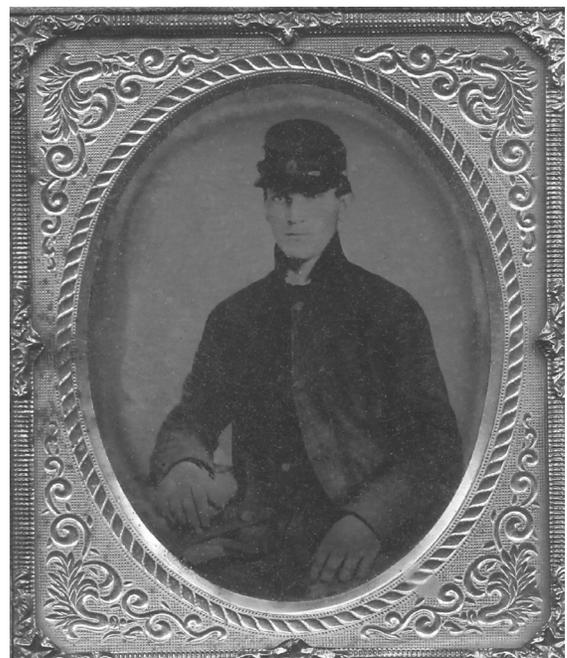
George S. Downing was Supervisor of the Town of Oyster Bay throughout the period of the Civil War. He was born on March 30, 1815, at East Norwich (then called Norwich). In 1844, he was chosen constable for the Town of Oyster Bay and served for four years before being elected Town Clerk in 1848. While serving as Town Clerk, he also was named on January 1, 1850, as Undersheriff of Queens County. On January 1, 1853, he became Sheriff of Queens County. In 1860, Downing was elected Supervisor of the Town of Oyster Bay.



As Supervisor of the Town of Oyster Bay, Downing was responsible for all financial matters of the Town, including the administration of the local enlistment bounty program. In August 1862, George Downing had to have the Town pay \$75.00 enlistment bounty to his 21-year old son Daniel Lewis Downing and also to James Vernon, the 22-year old close friend of Daniel Downing. The two young men had enlisted together on August 13, 1862, into Company M of the Harris Light Cavalry. In less than a year, both young men were dead; James Vernon was killed on the field at Brandy Station, Virginia, on June 10, 1863, and Daniel Lewis Downing was killed just a week later on June 17, 1863, in the battle at Aldie, Virginia. James Vernon was buried at Brandy Station where he fell. George Downing got a pass from the Secretary of War and travelled to Virginia to retrieve the body of his fallen son. Daniel Lewis Downing was reinterred in the Brookville Cemetery.

A few weeks after the deaths of James Vernon and Daniel Lewis Downing, the first of the draft lotteries was held, and although more than 600 men from Oyster Bay had already volunteered for service, 198 more were called in the draft lottery through October 31, 1863. George Downing felt that enough young men had been taken from the Town, and he became a very vocal opponent of the draft system. He solicited financial support from the citizenry and raised funds to pay for substitutes for many of the young men that had been drafted. Of the total 198 included in the draft, only four were actually called to service. On November 30, 1863, Supervisor Downing joined with the supervisors of the other towns in Queens County in passing a resolution to raise sufficient moneys to prevent any more young men from Queens County from being drafted. The resolution was successful, and there were no further young men drafted from Oyster Bay.

Daniel Lewis Downing enlisted despite the objections of his father. Daniel Underhill, also of Oyster Bay, wrote to his sister how he had witnessed his close friend Daniel Downing get shot and fall from his horse in the fierce cavalry fighting at Aldie, Virginia, in 1863. Underhill suffered a bullet wound to his arm in the same battle.



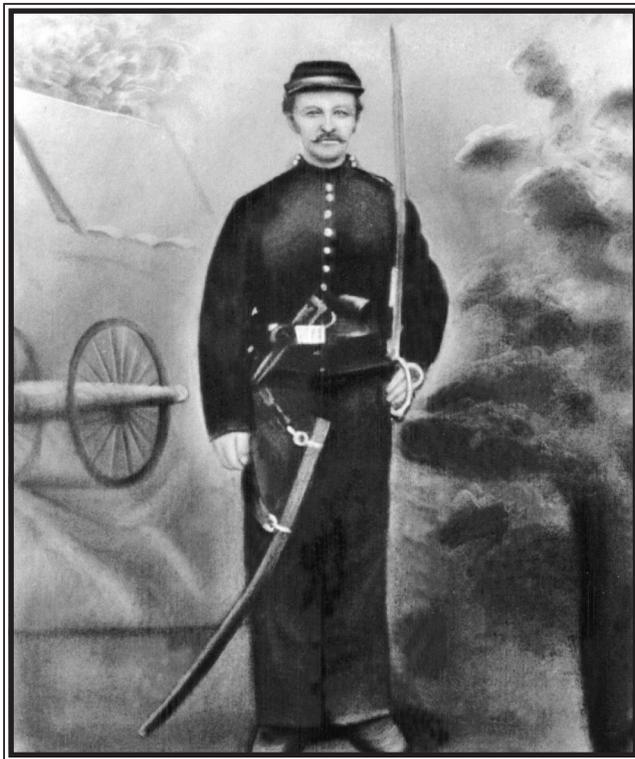
Cover Photo

Pictured on the cover is Private Jeremiah K. Davis of Locust Valley, who enlisted into the Harris Light Cavalry. He was captured at the battle in Spotsylvania, Virginia, in 1864 and sent to Libby Prison. Davis survived his imprisonment and returned to Locust Valley, where he died in 1903.

Profile of Harris Light Cavalry

The Harris Light Cavalry enlisted 124 young men from Oyster Bay during the war. More Oyster Bay men served in the Harris Light Cavalry than in any other unit. The young men from Oyster Bay who served in the Harris Light Cavalry fared much better than the average civil war soldier; nine were killed in action, three died of typhoid, two died at Belle Isle prison, one died in Libby prison, and four died at the infamous Andersonville prison.

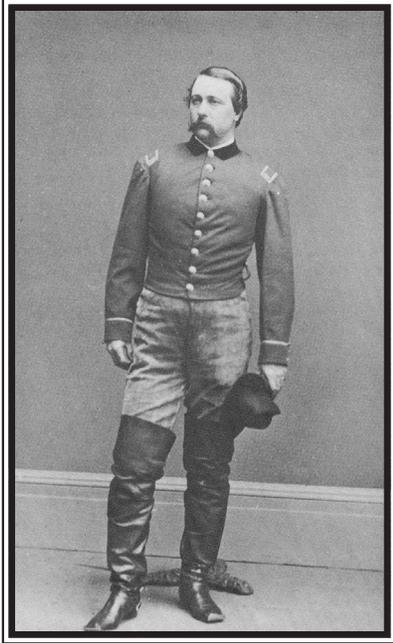
An interesting footnote: The designer of the Andersonville prison was Confederate General John Winder, whose sister Charlotte Aurelia Winder married James C. Townsend of Oyster Bay. During the war, Charlotte and her husband busied themselves with the researching and writing of *The Townsend Memorial*, a book on the history and genealogy of the three Townsend brothers, who settled in Oyster Bay in 1661. Charlotte Winder Townsend was murdered at her Lexington Avenue home in 1884.



John Wansor of Locust Valley, who served in the Harris Light Cavalry. He survived the war and later died in a fire at his Locust Valley home in 1906.



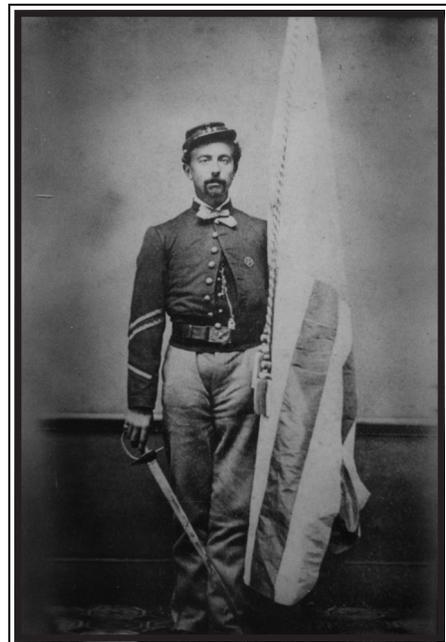
The Harris Light Cavalry was named for U.S. Senator Ira Harris of Albany, who helped raise six companies. In December 1861, the regiment received a unique Tiffany & Co. embroidered flag bearing his likeness. In 1971, this flag was sandwiched between two layers of nylon netting with additional layers of purple fabric to fill in the losses. The netting and purple fabric were later removed, and the flag now sits on top of compensation fabrics to indicate its original size.



Butler Coles was born at Dosoris (now Glen Cove) April 10, 1831, and was a son of Butler Coles and Julia Weeks and a grandson of Major General Nathaniel Coles, a hero of the War of 1812. His sister Miriam Doughty Coles Harris was the author of "Rutledge," published in 1859, and many other novels. Coles married Mary Townsend of Oyster Bay on October 18, 1857. In May 1862, Coles mustered with the 22nd New York Volunteers, which served at Baltimore and Harper's Ferry until September 5, 1862, when the members mustered out at New York. Coles then enlisted into Company C of the Harris Light Cavalry and was given a commission as a Second Lieutenant and assigned as Quartermaster for the Harris Light Cavalry. He later was promoted to First Lieutenant and became an aid to General Judson Kilpatrick, commander of the Harris Light Cavalry. Lt. Coles was captured and was held prisoner at Libby Prison, but was exchanged after seven months captivity. He mustered out on September 10, 1864, and returned to Oyster Bay. He

died on October 24, 1888, in New York City. He was buried at St. Paul's Episcopal Church Cemetery in Glen Cove. Note the "feet" behind Coles. They are holding an adjustable-height single column pipe leg with a neck brace to keep people steady during the longer exposure times of early photography. The stands were often referred to as "Brady stands" after the noted photographer Mathew B. Brady, even though there is no proven connection between Brady and the stand's invention ca. 1855. Brady is best known for the thousands of photographs he took during the Civil War, many of which were graphic in showing the realities of war in a way no artist's impression could. They are considered by most experts to be the most important visual documentation of the war.

Stephen Decatur James, named after the famous naval hero, was born in Oyster Bay in 1842. On August 23, 1862, he was enlisted into Company C of the 102nd New York Infantry by Walter R. Hewlett at Huntington. Pvt. James survived the Civil War and returned to Oyster Bay. He married a daughter of William Pettit. At the time of his death in 1896, he was working as a bartender at the Trout Pond Inn, which was operated by another Civil War veteran, John A. Franklin, who had served in the 3rd Missouri Cavalry. Stephen Decatur James is not mentioned anywhere in the Oyster Bay Civil War records because he had enlisted at Huntington, which kept its own records. This was the case for many young men from Oyster Bay who enlisted elsewhere. The converse is also true; many young men from other jurisdictions enlisted at Oyster Bay because of the very liberal bounty offered by the Town and by Queens County.



15th Regiment New York State Militia

The 15th Regiment, New York State Militia, was established by the New York State Military Law of 1847. In 1860, the entire Regiment consisted only of men in uniformed volunteer companies; 17 officers and 162 enlisted men. With the outbreak of the Civil War, the New York State Legislature passed a law, known as the Militia Law, on April 23, 1862, which required the enrollment into the militia of all able-bodied, white male citizens between the ages of 18 and 45 years. In the Town of Oyster Bay, all such individuals were enrolled into the 15th Regiment of the New York State Militia. The law required that the enrollment be completed every two years.

Young men from the Town of Oyster Bay were enrolled into either Company D or Company E of the 15th Regiment. Company D was basically the eastern part of the township, based in Oyster Bay, and Company E was the western part, based in Glen Cove. The enrolling officer for Company D was James M. Burtis in 1862 and Captain Stephen B. Powell in 1864. The enrolling officer for Company E was S. B. Craft in 1862 and Samuel Frost in 1864.

Enrollees between the ages of 18 and 30 years of age were classified as Class 1, and those between the ages of 30 and 45 years of age were classified as Class 2. The law stated that all those who were thus classified shall constitute the Reserve Militia of the State of New York.

The Militia Law required, under section 13, that "The reserve militia of the first and second classes, except such as shall volunteer, or be drafted as members of the national guard as hereinafter provided, shall assemble in their several company districts armed and equipped, as provided by law, for parade and inspection, on the first Monday of September in each year, at such hour and place as the captain or commandant shall designate." The law also set a fine of one dollar to be paid to the county treasurer by any enrollee who neglected to attend the annual assemblage of the reserve company.

Funding for encampments, equipment and other logistical support was slow in coming for the 15th Regiment. The Queens County Board of Supervisors did not feel they had the legal authority to appropriate funding for the unit. Many of the enrollees began leaving the unit to join units that were being funded and activated. Major Charles H. Burtis was among the first to leave when he joined the 74th New York Volunteers and received a Commission as Lieutenant Colonel. Burtis was followed by many others.

Men originally enrolled in the 15th Regiment of the New York State Militia entered several different units including the 2nd New York Volunteer Cavalry, also known as the Harris Light Cavalry; Duryea's Zouaves; the 74th New York Volunteers; the 2nd New York Volunteer Artillery; the Fifth Excelsior Brigade; the Fifth Regiment, also known as Sickles' Brigade; the 40th New York Volunteers and the 145th Infantry Regiment, also known as the Stanton Legion.

The only actions of the 15th Regiment as a unit were during the New York City Draft Riots of 1863 when the unit was activated under the command of Colonel Charles H. Burtis of Oyster Bay village. The Regiment served in Jamaica, Queens County, for a period of thirty days during the draft riots. The unit was, again, activated for another brief period in 1864 in New York Harbor to garrison Fort Richmond (later incorporated into Fort Wadsworth) on Staten Island.

The following listing of enrollees includes name, residence, age, class, book, and company. Under the 'book' column is either 62 or 64 (1862-1864) indicating in which book the line is listed. In some cases, names are repeated or otherwise duplicated. Due to the inconsistency of the spellings,

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and differences in the ways that enrolling officers entered the information, it was not practical to fully combine the two volumes. All entries are alphabetized by surname.

Samuel Frost, one of the enrolling officers for Company E, had the curious habit of ignoring a "Mc" or a "Van" as a part of someone's surname. This resulted in listings like "Cott, Van Garrett" instead of "VanCott, Garrett" and "Cabe, Mc Laurence" instead of "McCabe, Laurence". Researchers should keep this in mind when searching for names that could fall into this type of interpretation. The same enrolling officer also recorded middle initials in the reverse of the commonly accepted pattern; for example, Carpenter, Charles W. was recorded as Carpenter, W. Charles.

In July 1994, Oyster Bay Town Clerk Carl L. Marcellino sent out the 1862 15th Regiment Enrollment Books for Company D and E for de-acidification and conservation. These two volumes were bound into a common volume, which is identified on the spine as *Military Enrollment Book 1862 Oyster Bay*. In 1996, Oyster Bay Town Clerk Fanny L. Corsentino sent out the 1864 15th Regiment Enrollment Books for Company D and E for de-acidification and conservation. These two volumes were combined into a single volume, which is identified on the spine as *Enrollment of Persons Liable to Military Duty 1864 Company Regiment 15th Oyster Bay*.

After the Civil War, on May 14, 1866, Stephen B. Powell reported a "List of the names of persons belonging to Co. D 15th Reg on L.I. N.Y."

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1 st Lieut Chs W. Downing | John Nowlon | Joseph Ludlam |
| 2 nd Lieut Daniel B. Baker | Francis A. Brower | Wm. Thompson |
| Albert Tappen Sen. | John Hauxhurst | Edward R. Summers |
| George Smith | Albert Tappen Jr. | Patrick Flanagan |
| Whitson M. Searing | Abraham Hauxhurst | Mathew Brady |
| Sylvester Smith | Townsend Robbins | Michael McQuaid |
| Wm. E. Townsend | Albert S. Valentine | Michael Brennen |
| Henry A. Townsend | Conklin R. Brush | Joseph B. Wright |
| Oscar S. Summers | John B. Tappen | Chs. H. Golden |
| Robert S. Spicer | Philip Whyre | George W. Townsend |
| Chs. L. Stienzeick | Chs. Moore | John H. Remsen |
| Samuel Y. Larrabee | John VanNostrand | Elbert Bennett |
| David Robbins | Beekman H. Townsen | Henry C. Woodnutt |
| George W. Larrabee | Edward Duryea | Timothy Moran |
| John W. Baker | Henry Vernon | |

SS Stephen B. Powell
Capt.-Commanding Co. D.
15th Regt, N.Y. S. N. G."

The document was filed on May 30, 1866,
by John N. Remsen, Town Clerk, and notated
as "Members of Company D. 15th Regt. N.Y.N.G."

Colonel Charles H. Burtis

Charles Henry Burtis was born about 1830 in Oyster Bay and was the son of Townsend Weeks Burtis and Sarah Lowe. He was a descendant of Pietro Caesar Alburtus, the first Italian immigrant to America in 1635. Alburtus married Janse Meynje in 1642 in New Amsterdam. The name Alburtus evolved to Burtis over the years.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Charles H. Burtis was living in Oyster Bay; he was elected Tax Assessor for the Town of Oyster Bay on April 2, 1861. He was enrolled with the 15th Regiment of the New York State Militia in 1861 and given a commission as Major of Company D. Becoming impatient and wanting to get into the action of the war, Major Burtis left the unit and received a commission as Lieutenant Colonel in the 74th New York Infantry.

The 74th New York Infantry mustered on June 30, 1861, at Camp Scott on Staten Island, where they received basic training. In August 1861, the unit was assigned to Sickles' Brigade, which was part of General Hooker's Division of the Army of the Potomac. In April 1862, the 74th NY, as part of the 2nd Division, 3rd Corps, participated in the siege of Yorktown and played a major role in the battle of Williamsburg. The 74th NY suffered 143 killed in the fighting at Williamsburg. In the book *The Honors of the Empire State in the War of the Rebellion*, the author wrote of Burtis: "He was with his gallant regiment in the various battles on the Peninsula, and fought not only wisely, but too well, as the fatigue he underwent resulted in illness, which compelled him to resign."

Lt. Col. Burtis returned to Oyster Bay in 1862 and resumed his former life while he regained his health. The following year, he returned to duty as Colonel of Company D of the 15th Regiment, New York State Militia. When the draft riots broke out in New York City in July 1863, Colonel Burtis and the 15th Regiment were called to duty in Jamaica, Queens. The 15th Regiment was, again, called to duty in 1864 to help protect the port of New York City.

On April 6, 1864, Colonel Burtis married Martha L. Davis of Morris, New York. On December 22, 1865, Burtis was elected a Trustee for one year of Oyster Bay School District 9, where he owned 55 acres of land. He later moved his family to Brooklyn, where he lived at 135 Decatur Street. He was active in the John A. Roebling Post, Grand Army of the Republic (see note below), until his sudden death at his home on June 2, 1893. His wife Martha had died in 1878 and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn. On June 4, 1893, Colonel Burtis was buried at Greenwood next to his wife. In his will, which was probated on June 30, 1893, in Kings County, Burtis left his interest in property at Oyster Bay to his surviving son, Charles Ernest Burtis.

Note: The Grand Army of the Republic, or GAR as it became known, was a fraternal organization for veterans of the Union Army. Founded in 1866 in Decatur, Illinois, the GAR was among the first organized advocacy groups for veterans, lobbying the US Congress to establish veterans' pensions and soldiers' homes for invalids, as well as performing relief work. It also wielded considerable political power, with five of its members elected President of the United States. At its peak in 1890, it boasted more than 400,000 members. The organization's final encampment was held in 1949; the last surviving member died in 1956.



An etching of Lt. Col. Charles H. Burtis

The Civil War Bounty Program

The minutes of the semi-annual Oyster Bay Town meetings are relatively silent on the subject of the Civil War. The earliest entry related to the war involves a resolution passed at a special Town meeting held in East Norwich on August 26, 1862. President Abraham Lincoln had issued a call for troops to aid the cause of the Union.

The Electors passed a resolution authorizing the Supervisor "to borrow the sum of twenty thousand dollars to pay a bounty to persons who may Volunteer in the service of the United States from said Town." Justices John Rushmore, Allen Hawxhurst, Samuel Frost and Charles Duryea, along with Town Clerk John N. Remsen, all voted in favor of the resolution. There is no mention in the minutes of Oyster Bay Town Supervisor George S. Downing, the person they authorized to borrow the twenty thousand dollars.

The Electors had met earlier in the month, on the 15th, for the purpose of devising means for raising money, on the credit of the taxable property of the Town, to offer bounties for volunteers under the recent calls of the President of the United States. The bounty was set at \$75 for those who would "serve for three years or during the war, and also the sum of fifty dollars for nine months, in order to fill up the Quota of men which this Town is called upon to furnish to the General Government, for the purpose of speedily crushing the Rebellion."

A second part of the resolution authorized paying any monies collected in excess of that needed for the bounty program to be used for the financial "relief of the needy families of such volunteers as shall enter the Army from the Town of Oyster Bay." Any monies left over were to be returned to the people. Raising the money through the collection of taxes would take considerable time, so the Electors authorized the Supervisor to borrow the twenty thousand dollars with the amount borrowed "together with all interest thereon be levied and assessed upon the Taxable property of the Town."

A committee was appointed to control and disperse the bounty and relief funds. The members were David R. Floyd Jones, David W. Jones, Joseph Whaley, Daniel K. Youngs, E. H. DeLanguilette, Joseph K. Milnor, Solomon Townsend, Frederick A. Peterson and Town Supervisor George S. Downing.

At the annual Town meeting held in East Norwich on April 7, 1863, the committee that had been appointed to afford relief to the families of volunteers presented its report. They had disbursed to the wives of 51 volunteers and their children under twelve years of age three dollars per month to every wife and two dollars per month to every child, which totaled \$1,761. The committee also reported that it still had \$368 and planned on reducing the amounts paid for the months of May and June of 1863 to one dollar for each wife and fifty cents for each child. This would result in the disposition of the total amount of \$2,129, which had been raised by public loans.

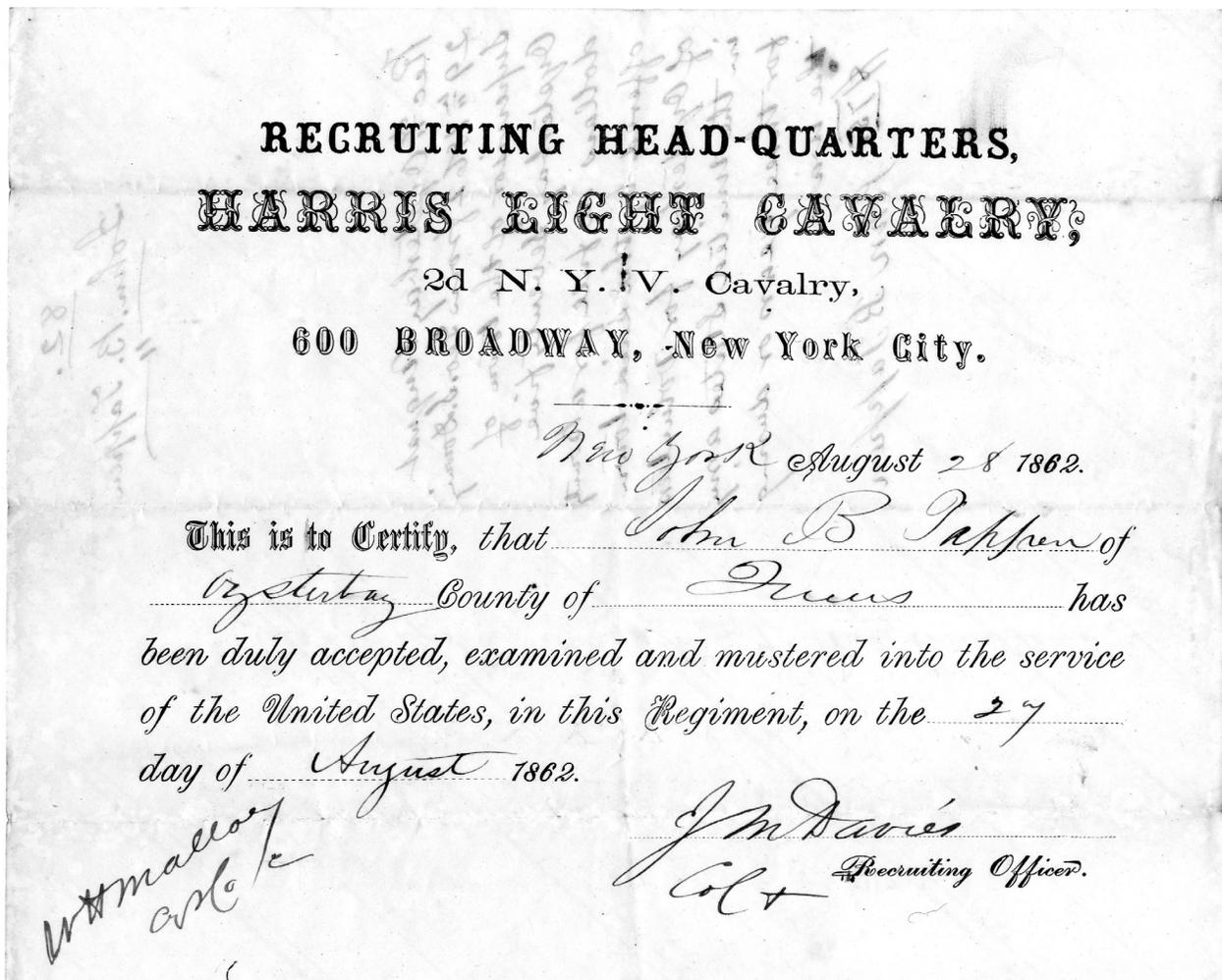
The committee suggested to the Electors "the propriety of instituting at this Town meeting proper measures for a continuance of the aid heretofore granted during the period that the services of our citizens may be required in the Army." In response, the Electors passed a resolution at that meeting authorizing the Supervisor "to borrow upon the credit of the Town of Oyster Bay the sum of Three Thousand Five Hundred Dollars to be applied to the aid of families of the Volunteers."

The anticipated early end to the war did not come, and President Abraham Lincoln put

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out additional calls for more troops to aid in the Union cause. At a special Town meeting at East Norwich on July 16, 1864, the Electors voted \$60,000 to pay additional bounties for volunteers. On January 11, 1865, at another special Town meeting in East Norwich, the Electors met for the purpose of raising yet more money to pay bounties. After what appears to have been prolonged discussion, the meeting was adjourned to meet again at East Norwich on the 17th of January 1865. At that meeting, the Electors voted, by ballot, to raise the sum of \$150,000 "for the purpose of paying bounties to Volunteers under the recent call of the President, and to pay the incidental expenses of such volunteering." They also authorized the Volunteering Committee "to refund to any person who shall furnish a Volunteer substitute the sum of four Hundred Dollars (\$400) either in currency or Town Bonds, provided such Substitute be duly credited upon the Quota of this town under the call of December 19, 1864."

A few months later, in April 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered his forces at Appomattox Courthouse, thus bringing the long war to an end. After the final accounting, the Supervisor of the Town of Oyster Bay was authorized at the annual Town meeting on April 3, 1867, to, "sell \$2,000 of the New York State Bounty Loan Bonds now held by the town and to pay the same over to the Trustees of the Jones Fund for the support of the Poor."



Bounty Certificate of John B. Tappen of Oyster Bay. The Harris Light Cavalry issued these certificates so recruits could collect their bounties.

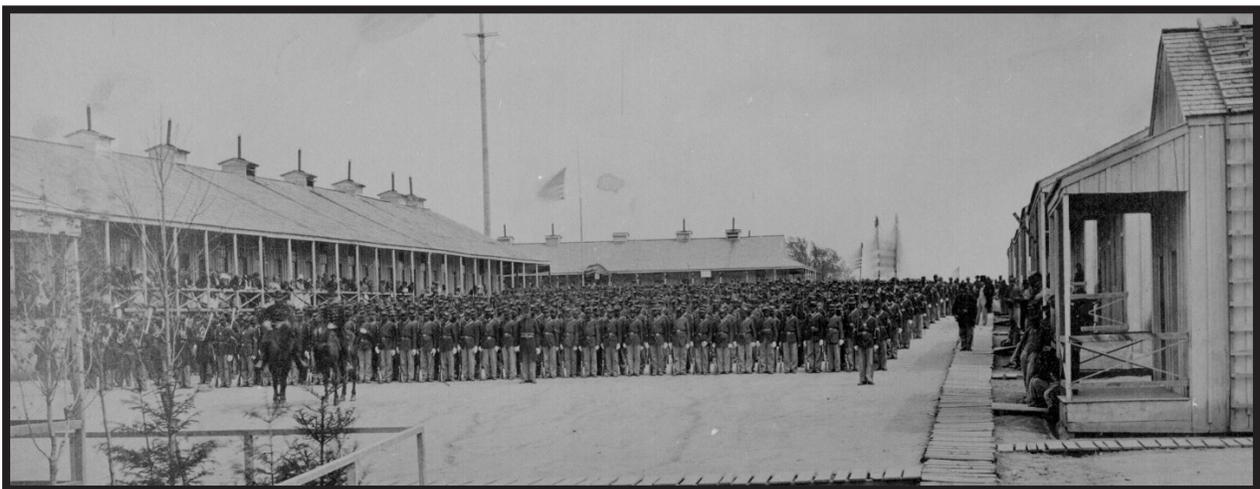
20th and 26th United States Colored Infantry

The United States Army refused to accept African-American volunteers at the outset of the Civil War fearing alienation of the border slave states that had remained in the Union. The July 17, 1862, Second Confiscation and Militia Act gave President Abraham Lincoln authority to enlist African-Americans for any purpose "he may judge best for the public welfare". This act resulted in the formation of some African-American units, but not in New York. President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, paved the way for African-Americans to enlist in the Union cause, and on May 22, 1863, the Bureau of Colored Troops was established to manage the growing numbers of enlistees. In July 1863, riots in New York City protesting the new draft lottery resulted in the lynching deaths of eleven black men; African-Americans and recent Irish immigrants became the targets of those opposing the draft laws.

New York's Governor Horatio Seymour had resisted the formation of any African-American units, but on December 3, 1863, the Secretary of War, responding to a request from the Union League Club of New York, gave the club authorization to raise an African-American federal regiment. The Union League Club raised funds from its membership for the outfitting of the regiment. James A. Roosevelt became the keeper of the records for the Union League Club and notated all of the Union League members, including all of the Roosevelt brothers, who each contributed to the cause. The unit was to be known as the 20th United States Colored Infantry under command of Colonel Nelson B. Bartram.

When the call went out, 26 young African-American men from Oyster Bay immediately answered and enlisted at Jamaica. The response was so great that a second regiment had to be formed; it was named the 26th United States Colored Infantry and was under the command of Colonel William Silliman. Some who had initially enlisted into the 20th, but did not immediately muster, wound up being placed into the 26th. Both units were mustered in February 1864 at Rikers Island in New York and underwent training there until March 1864. The 20th then went to New Orleans, where they remained until January 1865; the unit mustered out on October 7, 1865. The 26th was sent to Beaufort, South Carolina, where they served until April 1865 when they were transferred to Port Royal, South Carolina, before mustering out on August 28, 1865.

The 20th lost one soldier due to wounds in action, while 263 enlisted men died of disease. The 26th lost 21 killed in action and seven died due to wounds received in action; 102 enlisted men from the 26th died of disease.



The 26th US Colored Regiment, that mustered and trained on Riker's Island, New York, parades at Camp William Penn, Pennsylvania.

DAVID CARLL, Private

26th US Colored Infantry

David Carll was born in Oyster Bay in 1842. Carll enlisted at Jamaica into the 20th US Colored Regiment on January 2, 1864, for a period of three years. He received the normal bounty of \$300, plus a monthly allotment of \$3 for his wife, the former Louisa Appleford. Carll used his bounty money to purchase a plot of land at Oyster Bay on January 7, 1864; descendants of David Carll still live on that same plot of land. By the time he mustered, the 20th US Colored had reached its full complement, and Carll was placed into the 26th US Colored. Carll served honorably with the 26th US Colored until his discharge on August 28, 1865. He returned to Oyster Bay and resumed his prior work as a laborer. In his Civil War pension application, he stated that he had also worked on the oyster boats in Oyster Bay. David Carll and his wife Louisa raised a large family. His descendants include his great-great-granddaughter and former Miss America Vanessa Williams.



SIMON RAPPALYEA

Simon Rappalyea was born in Oyster Bay in 1828. On January 5, 1864, he enlisted as a Private at Jamaica, New York, into the 20th United States Colored Infantry, which mustered at Rikers Island. Within a few months, he was at Beaufort, South Carolina, where he wrote to his wife back at Oyster Bay. The letter, a copy of which appears on the two following pages, was found about 30 years ago when Casimir Rogus was doing some renovation to his home on Mill River Road in Oyster Bay hamlet. Research showed that the house was owned by Simon Rappalyea in the 1870s. The letter tells of the difficulty the African-American soldiers were having getting paid the regular \$16 per month, the same as the white soldiers, but the federal government was paying them only \$7 a month with a promise that the rest would come later. Simon also wrote on September 11, 1864 that “our folks has taken Atlanta with 25 thousand prisoners, today our Regiment has fired 100 guns as cheers for it.” Simon survived the Civil War and returned to Oyster Bay. In 1884, when Mrs. Charlotte Aurelia Winder Townsend was brutally attacked with a hammer at her Lexington Avenue home, Simon Rappalyea was arrested and charged with the crime. Mrs. Townsend died later from her wounds, but Simon was exonerated when the true murderer was discovered. Simon’s house had been thoroughly trashed in the search by investigators for evidence against Simon. After he was acquitted, Town of Oyster Bay officials voted to pay Simon Rappalyea out of Town tax money for the damages caused by the investigators. Simon died on November 24, 1894, and was buried in Pine Hollow Cemetery in Oyster Bay. Eleven other Civil War veterans of the 20th and 26th US Colored Regiments were also buried in the Pine Hollow Cemetery.

1863 Civil War Recruiting Poster

After the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, posters such as the one on the right broadcast a national call for African-American men to enlist in the Union army. Frederick Douglass and other African-American leaders endorsed the appeal, and by war’s end, almost 200,000 African-Americans had served in the Union forces.





September 11th 1864

Cousford South Carolina

Dear Wife I once more take my
pen in hand to inform you that
I Am Well and I hope these few
Lines May find you the Same as
it Leaves Me I received your kind
Letter the 7th and was glad to from
you and the Money I feel Much
pleased about it your note to Me
that you had a Cold I want you
to be Careful and not get your
feet wet take good Care of your
self your note about my Wages I
got paid off for at 7 dollars
per Month but in the City
16 dollars they told us if we
would take 7 dollars they would
give us 16 and all our back pay
and So they will I think we
will get paid again Soon and
then I will Send you Some
More Money you Must keep good

Spits I Think I Shall get home
once More give respects to all ~~my~~
my friends tell them I Am Well
We have Some good news from the
War our folks has taken Atlanta
With 25 thousand prisoners to day
our Regiment has fired 100 guns
as Cheers for it Write Soon and
Let Me know the news round home

Yes

I

M

No More from your husband
Simon Rufflee

Same

Soldier's Power of Attorney

In April 1864, the New York State Legislature enacted a law that gave soldiers away from home in the war the authorization to cast their vote by absentee ballot. The soldier would complete a form called "Soldier's Power of Attorney" and have it signed by his commanding officer and then forwarded back to the soldier's local voting district.

Wait Mitchell, of Oyster Bay, completed his Power of Attorney form listing his unit as the 26th US Colored Troops. Private Mitchell designated John Rushmore, who was then a Justice of the Peace and election inspector at Oyster Bay, to cast his ballot for him in the November 8, 1864, General Election. Mitchell's commanding officer, Captain Salsbury, witnessed the signature, (an X, which indicated that Mitchell couldn't write) and passed the form along for the signature of Captain Fisk, commander of the 127th New York Volunteers, the unit to which the 26th US Colored was attached. Captain Fisk then sent the form along to Oyster Bay. Within the envelope in which the Power of Attorney form was mailed, there was a small piece of paper with the name Horace Greeley printed on it, indicating the voting preference of Wait Mitchell. Horace Greeley was a New York Elector for President Abraham Lincoln, who was then running for a second term as President. Below is a copy of Wait Mitchell's completed Soldier's Power of Attorney form.

Soldier's Power of Attorney.

In pursuance of an Act of the Legislature of the State of New-York, entitled "An Act to enable the qualified electors of this State, absent therefrom in the Military Services of the United States, in the Army or Navy thereof to vote," Passed April 21st, 1864.

I Wait Mitchell a member of Company D
of the 26th Regiment U.S. Colored Troops
now at or near Beaufort in the State of
South Carolina (or Territory) of _____ (or attached to the
United States vessel _____), and being a resident of the town of
Oyster Bay (or of the city of _____) in the county of
Suffolk, do hereby authorize and empower John Rushmore
of the town of Oyster Bay (or of the city of _____) in the
county of Suffolk to cast for me and in my name and stead, in
pursuance of Section 2, of said Act, my vote or ballot, the same as if I was personally present at the
General election to be held on the 8th day of November 1864

Witness,
Wait Mitchell
Capt. Salsbury Capt. 26th U.S.C.T.

On this 25th day of October 1864, before me personally
came Wait Mitchell to me known to be the same person des-
cribed in the foregoing instrument, who being by me duly sworn deposes and says, that he executed the
foregoing instrument for the uses and purposes therein mentioned. And at the same time appeared
before me Capt. Salsbury Capt. 26th U.S.C.T., who being by me duly sworn
deposes and says that he saw the said Wait Mitchell sign and
execute said instrument in his presence, whereupon the said Capt. Salsbury Capt.
26th U.S.C.T. became the subscribing witness thereto.

AWF
Capt 127th N.Y. Vols

1862 Enrollment Book

The 1862 Enrollment Book is properly known as *Enrollment of Persons Liable to Military Duty in the Town of Oyster Bay, County of Queens*. The book was an attempt to identify all those white males between the ages of 18 and 45 years old living within the Town of Oyster Bay who could be called upon for military service. This was the Selective Service Draft Registration of the Civil War period.

There were certain persons who were considered exempt from service, such as Justice of the Peace, Sheriff, Teacher in Common Schools, idiots and lunatics. Many claimed exemption due to their service as Fireman or Mail Carrier. Many also claimed exemption as 'Aliens,' and some claimed various sorts of physical disabilities, which would prevent them from serving.

The 1862 Enrollment Book carried the following listings; name, age, occupation and remarks. There are more than 1,300 listings in the book, which are arranged alphabetically. The book is particularly valuable because there are many entries which were not included in the end of the war summary prepared by the Town Clerk in 1865 (see section entitled "Civil War Veterans-Oyster Bay").

The "Remarks" section usually includes detailed information about the date of enlistment and unit serving with. The "Remarks" section also contains some very significant information for local history research, as well as military history. One of the claimed exemptions was service to the government of the United States. Those who served as Postmasters in the various localities within the Township sought exemption under this category. The Postmaster in almost every village in the Town in 1862 can be identified through these listings.

In 1994, the 1862 Enrollment Book was sent out for de-acidification and rebinding by Oyster Bay Town Clerk Carl L. Marcellino.



Samples of Civil War recruitment posters. The posters enticed men with patriotic appeals, enlistment bonuses, and promises of well supplied units with experienced officers. Patriotic imagery contributed to the appeal. Some were designed to appeal to certain segments of the population, such as posters in German, or with harps and shamrocks to appeal to an Irish constituency.

1864 Enrollment Book

The 1864 Enrollment Book is maintained by the Oyster Bay Town Clerk. The book can be a very valuable source for both historians and genealogists. Information contained in the Enrollment Book includes name, age, residence, occupation, birthplace, and a 'notes section'. The 'notes' section basically includes such information as whether an enrollee is exempt from service, has had prior service, claims 'Alien' status, etc.

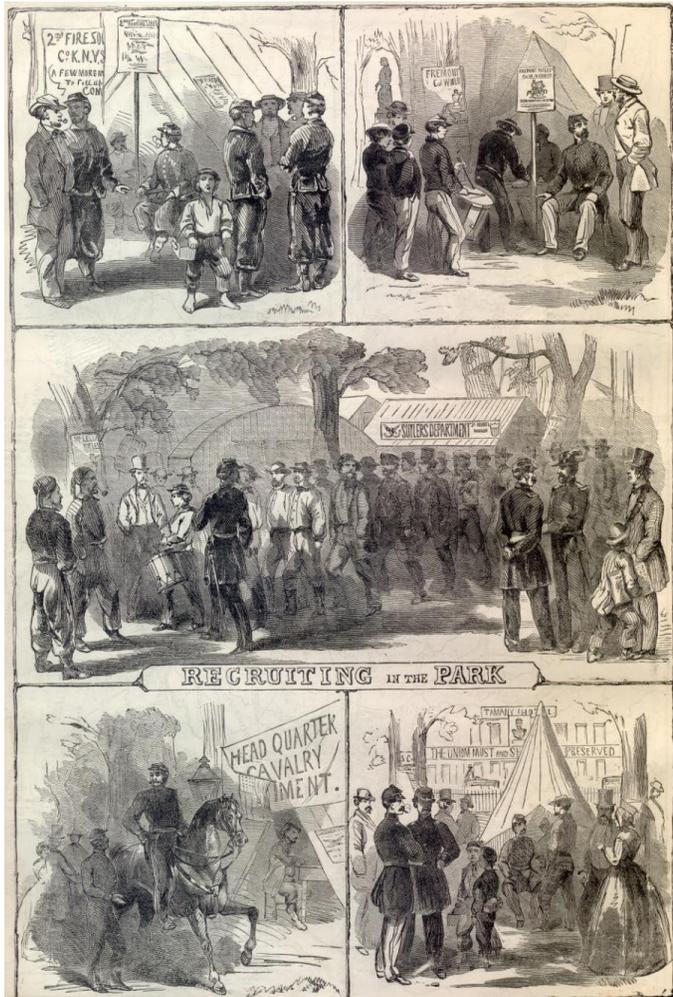
Two of the enrollees were exempt from service because they had no teeth. At least two opposing teeth were needed to bite off the small gunpowder bags used in the smoothbore weapons, which were still the mainstay armament of the Civil War infantry. Another was exempted from service as being declared 'lunatic'. A few were listed as having paid substitutes.

Many claimed exemption as 'Alien'. The New York State Militia Law of 1862 stated that, "All able bodied white male citizens, and persons of foreign birth who shall have declared, on oath, their intention to become citizens under and in pursuance of the laws thereof, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five years, residing in this State and not exempted by the laws of the United States shall be subject to military service."

Following the Emancipation Proclamation, the Militia Law was amended to allow for the enrollment of 'coloreds'. The Enrollment Book has the notation (Col) for each of the black enrollees

Several of the place names have changed since the 1800s. South Oyster Bay is now known as Massapequa, Bedelltown is now a part of Bethpage, Jerusalem is now part of Wantagh, Oak Neck is now known as Bayville. Although the name of Oak Neck was officially changed before the Civil War, it took a few years before the name Bayville came into common usage. Some place names were changed because of the confusion by the Post Office with other upstate villages of the same name. Norwich was changed to East Norwich, and Cold Spring was changed to Cold Spring Harbor. Lloyd Neck was a part of the Town of Oyster Bay at the time of the Civil War. Several years after the war, Lloyd Neck was transferred to the Town of Huntington.

In 1994, this volume was in its original cover; the hinges were broken, the spine adhesive was deteriorated and the paper was acidic. Oyster Bay Town Clerk Carl L. Marcellino sent the volume out for conservation, thus preserving it for future historians and researchers.



Illustrations of an August 1861 recruitment drive in New York City that appeared in the September 7, 1861, edition of Harper's Weekly .

Civil War Veterans-Oyster Bay

The Legislature of the State of New York enacted legislation on May 11, 1865, entitled, "An Act in Relation to the Bureau of Military Statistics". The purpose of the act was to have recorded all known information within local records regarding the service of residents in the war. The full name of the record was "Complete Record, as Required by Chapter 690, of the Laws of 1865, relating to Officers, Soldiers and Seaman, Composing the Quotas of the Troops Furnished to the United States by the Town of Oyster Bay, Queens County, State of New York, in the War of the Rebellion, and covering the period from the 15th day of April, 1861, to the date of the Certificate of the Town Clerk, attached to this record".

The Oyster Bay record was compiled and recorded by John N. Remsen, Oyster Bay Town Clerk, who signed the Certification on December 20, 1865. A complete copy was sent to the Bureau of Military Record and a complete copy was retained by the Town Clerk.

The Civil War Record of 1865 is by far the most valuable of the various records related to the war held in the archives of the Town of Oyster Bay. It is the only Civil War Record that contains the names of the parents of soldiers and, as such, is very valuable to genealogy researchers. The record contains information on more than 560 young men from Oyster Bay, who fought in many different units during the war. The information is very detailed and includes name, date and place of birth, date enlisted and rank, place of enlistment, bonus received, occupation, names of parents, and date and place of discharge. For many listings, there is also information regarding such things as imprisonment, cause of death, promotions, etc. In the case of Naval Service, the listings include the name of the vessel served on.

The information in the record, as completed by Town Clerk Remsen, does not always agree with other information sources. The local record lists individuals according to the unit in which he initially served. In the course of the war, as the fighting intensified, many units suffered high casualty rates and were often consolidated with other units. There were also many transfers for varied reasons in the course of the war.

There are many individuals who were recorded in different units although they were members of the same unit. A good example of this is the 15th Regiment, New York State Militia. Many young men from the local militia mustered into the 74th Infantry. Some units of the 74th were also known as the Fifth Excelsior Regiment and also called Sickle's Brigade. Additionally, there were names given to some of the individual companies within the regiment. The unit also became part of the 40th New York Volunteers late in the war.

There were many other such units, like the 145th Infantry Regiment, which was also known as Stanton Legion, and the 127th Infantry Regiment, known as the Monitors. The 155th Infantry Regiment had many names including Corcoran's Brigade and the Irish Legion.

It was a futile task for the Town Clerk to keep track of the many changes in unit names and of the many reassignments during the war, so the records were maintained according to the original information received by the Town Clerk.

During the completion of the new Oyster Bay Town Clerk's Office on Audrey Avenue in Oyster Bay in 1901, the original record was temporarily placed on the floor in the basement compartment

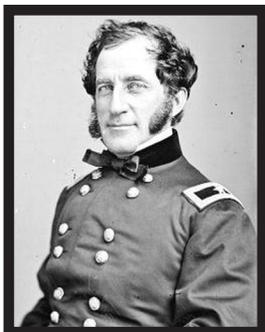
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under the record vault, which was not yet completed. During this temporary storage period, the basement was flooded to some depth. Many of the original Town records were stored on top of the Civil War records and were thus spared from damage, but the Civil War records were badly damaged in the 1901 flooding.

In 1991, Oyster Bay Town Clerk Carl L. Marcellino sent out the Civil War record for professional conservation. The record had been disbound, the paper was acidic and all pages were suffering from significant mold damage. The record was dismantled, pages were flattened and all pages were de-acidified and reinforced. The record was then re-sewn and backed with linen and given a new goatskin cover.



On April 12, 1861, a group of military enthusiasts gathered in Manhattan to form a volunteer regiment for two year's service in the cause of the Union. Their choice for commander of what was initially called the "Advance Guard" was Colonel Abram Duryée, a wealthy mahogany importer with three decades of experience in the 7th New York State Militia. At Duryée's suggestion, the new unit was outfitted in a colorful variation of the French Zouave uniform. The flashy attire, and Duryée's reputation, attracted hundreds of volunteers for the 5th New York Volunteer Infantry, or "Duryée's Zouaves," as the unit came to be called. While most recruits hailed from Manhattan, Long Island, including some men from Oyster Bay, also supplied a sizeable contingent. The regiment saw action in the Civil War's first infantry battle on Virginia soil, Big Bethel, as well as Hanover Courthouse, Gaines' Mill, Second Bull Run (Manassas), Antietam, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsburg, earning a reputation as a fierce and disciplined fighting force. The surviving members of the unit returned to New York to muster out on May 14, 1863, but some went on to serve in the 146th New York, 165th New York and the 5th Veteran Volunteers. This photo, taken early in the 20th Century, shows aged veterans of the Duryée Zouaves marching in a Memorial Day parade on Manhattan's Riverside Drive.



Abram Duryée (April 29, 1815 – September 27, 1890), commander of the unit that was named for him. Born into a family with a history of military service...his grandfather fought in the American Revolution, and his father and two uncles were officers during the War of 1812...he joined the New York State Militia in 1833 and rose to the rank of Colonel. He was promoted to Brigadier General after his Zouaves distinguished themselves at Big Bethel. Interestingly, his son Jacob also served as a general in the Civil War.

Town Supervisor
JOSEPH SALADINO



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