

A SUMMARY  
MILITARY HISTORY OF WORCESTER.

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**OF WORCESTER**



TO

**Samuel H. Putnam,**

AUTHOR OF

THE STORY OF COMPANY A, 25TH REGT. M. V.





## A SUMMARY

# MILITARY HISTORY OF WORCESTER.

VERY little is known to-day of what should properly be classed as military affairs in Worcester and its vicinity during the period which covers the early and unsuccessful attempts at settlement. The male inhabitants were armed if not organized against the savage foe, and doubtless more than one shot was fired, but of these and other efforts in defence of life and property no definite or particular history exists. It is not until after the time of the third settlement that recorded facts begin to give the information we seek. During the Indian troubles of 1722 Worcester furnished five men to the company of scouts under Major John Chandler. In 1723 seven of the inhabitants enlisted as soldiers and served during the winter. August 3, 1724, Uriah Ward of Worcester, in service at Rutland, was killed by Indians.

The town contributed liberally to the defence of the province during the wars with the French, and expended its means freely for the reduction of the fortresses of Nova Scotia and Canada. Benjamin Gleason of Worcester died before the walls of Louisburg in 1745, and Adonijah Rice, the first-born of our native citizens, was in a company of rangers in the siege. In 1746 Fort Massachusetts at what is now Williamstown was defended by a

garrison partly of Worcester men. In 1748 a company of fifty-three, all from this town, followed the Indians for seventeen days but returned without engaging in battle. Seventeen Worcester men were in service in Nova Scotia, and seventeen more at Fort Cumberland. John Walker was commissioned a captain. Adonijah Rice and another were in the expedition against Crown Point in August. In September there were fourteen volunteers from Worcester. Many were in the ranks of the army that acted against Crown Point in 1756; and in the two succeeding years several were captured, and a number died of wounds and disease at Lake George. After the surrender of Fort William Henry the whole militia of the town marched to Sheffield, 105 miles distant, but the enemy having retired the forces were disbanded. A company of Worcester men under Captain Samuel Clark Paine was with General Amherst in 1758, and continued in service till the peace of 1763. Worcester furnished to the provincial service during the French wars 1 colonel, 1 lieutenant-colonel, 2 majors, 6 captains, 8 lieutenants, 7 ensigns, 27 sergeants, 2 surgeons, 1 chaplain and 1 adjutant. From 1748 to 1762 there were 453 men in service from the town, not including those who enlisted in the regular army. The name of John Chandler, borne by three generations, is prominent in the military annals of the town during this period, and the title of Colonel descended from father to son and grandson. The above facts are from the *Town Records*, Lincoln's *History of Worcester* and Blake's *Indian Troubles in Rutland*.

In the American Revolution Worcester was foremost in contributing men and means to the cause. Lincoln says: "Worcester furnished a large proportion of her male population to the army. The exact number in service cannot be ascertained with



certainty. If we include with the troops of the regular line those called out for short periods of duty, the following may be considered as a correct statement of the numbers of men from Worcester in military service during seven years of war: 1 colonel, 2 lieutenant-colonels, 2 majors, 7 captains, 10 lieutenants, 5 ensigns, 20 sergeants and 389 privates." The name of Colonel Timothy Bigelow will ever be illustrious in military annals. A history in detail of the revolutionary acts of the town will be found in Albert A. Lovell's *Worcester in the Revolution*.

In Shays's Rebellion Worcester men were found on both sides. In 1807, when it was apprehended that hostilities with England would immediately ensue, the Worcester Light Infantry tendered their services in defence of the country. Adam Walker, a son of John Walker of Worcester, enlisted in the regular army, was in the battle of Tippecanoe, and was hit by bullets several times, but was not injured. In later service he was with Hull's army at Detroit, was included in the surrender and sent to Halifax. After his exchange he wrote a book reflecting severely on General Hull. This volume is rare and commands a large price. A copy is in the possession of The Worcester Society of Antiquity among the treasures of the George Allen Library.

The war of 1812 was not popular in this vicinity, and not a large number of Worcester men were in service. Sabin Mann, son of Joseph Mann of Worcester, was killed at Queenstown in 1812. The Light Infantry and the Artillery company marched to the defence of the coast on the threatened British attack in September, 1814, and remained in camp near Boston several weeks. In this war Massachusetts furnished 3,110 men. Thomas Gardner Mower, at a later period Surgeon-General of the United States Army, was a native of Worcester.

The Mexican war did not find much favor in the eyes of New England people. Pollard, a Southern authority (how trustworthy we cannot say), states that of 66,684 men engaged, the South furnished 43,630. Of the New England States only Massachusetts and New Hampshire contributed, the former sending 1,047 and the latter 1, which must have been General Franklin Pierce, afterwards President of the United States. The same writer claims that of the 155,364 soldiers in the war of 1812, the South furnished 96,812 and the North 58,552. New England sent 5,162 and South Carolina 5,696. In the Mexican war Captain George Lincoln, a son of ex-Governor Levi Lincoln, was killed at Buena Vista, February 23, 1847; and Lieutenant John Green Burbank, another Worcester man, fell at Molino del Rey, September 8, 1847. So bitter was the feeling in this vicinity against the war that while the funeral procession of Captain Lincoln was passing some of the shopkeepers of Main street displayed emblems and placards which reflected upon the Government and the course of the deceased.

When the first gun of the Rebellion was fired at Fort Sumter, Worcester was ready, and on the 17th of April, 1861, the Light Infantry departed for Washington. This company belonged to the ill-fated Sixth Regiment, but was with the detachment which passed safely through Baltimore at the time of the massacre, and proceeded directly to the Capital. The Light Infantry's term of service was mostly spent in Maryland, and the company arrived home August 1. On the 20th of April the Third Battalion Rifles, made up of the City Guards, the Emmet Guards, and the Holden Rifles, under command of Major Charles Devens, followed the Light Infantry. The Battalion was on duty around Baltimore most of the time until it returned the 2d of August. On the 28th

of June Camp Scott at South Worcester was occupied by the Fifteenth Regiment, the first Worcester County regiment, with Charles Devens as colonel. This regiment participated in the disastrous battle of Ball's Bluff, and also in the battles of Fair Oaks, Antietam, Gettysburg, the Wilderness and others. It arrived home July 21, 1864 with its numbers reduced to 150 men.

The Twenty-first Regiment went into camp on the 19th of July. The Agricultural or Fair Grounds were occupied, and the name Camp Lincoln was given in honor of ex-Governor Levi Lincoln. The regiment departed for the seat of war August 23d, embarked for North Carolina on the Burnside expedition, and took part in the battles of Roanoke and New Berne. The next spring it was sent to Virginia, and was in the battles of second Bull Run, Chantilly, South Mountain, Antietam, Fredericksburg, the Wilderness and others. It was mustered out August 30, 1864.

The Twenty-fifth Regiment left Worcester October 31, 1861. It formed a part of the forces of the Burnside expedition, was at Roanoke and New Berne, and remained in North Carolina until the fall of 1863. The next spring and summer the regiment saw hard service, passed through Drewry's Bluff, Cold Harbor and other battles, and spent the last months before Petersburg. It arrived home (excepting a portion that had reënlisted the winter before), October 13, 1864.

The Thirty-fourth Regiment departed on the 15th of August, 1862, and was in service till July 6, 1865. It took part in the battles of New Market, Cedar Creek, Piedmont, Lynchburg, Winchester and others. The Thirty-sixth Regiment followed the last September 2d, 1862, and returned June 21, 1865. It passed through Fredericksburg, the Wilderness, Spottsylvania Court House, and other battles, performed much hard service and made

many long marches. The Fifty-first Regiment, which enlisted for nine months, left November 25, 1862, and returned July 21, 1863. Most of its service was in North Carolina. On the 18th of April, 1864, the Fifty-seventh Regiment, the last of the Worcester County regiments, proceeded to the scene of conflict. This regiment was in the battle of the Wilderness and numerous minor encounters, and spent the summer before Petersburg. It was mustered out in August, 1865.

In the list of Worcester's martyrs in the Rebellion the names of John William Grout, who fell at Ball's Bluff, General George H. Ward, who fell at Gettysburg, and for whom the local Grand Army post was named, Thomas J. Spurr, S. F. Haven, Jr., Dexter F. Parker, Rev. Samuel Souther, the Wellingtons, the Bacons, Thomas O'Neil and Henry McConville are prominent. Of those who gained distinction in the conflict Charles Devens, Josiah Pickett, William S. Lincoln and A. B. R. Sprague are well-known. Worcester sent 3,927 men to the War for the Union, at a total direct money cost of \$586,054. Of this amount \$245,653 was paid for bounties and expense of recruiting; \$93,650 commutation and substitutes; and \$246,751 State aid to families.

Rev. Abijah P. Marvin's *Worcester in the War of the Rebellion* is an interesting and valuable book, which gives a very full account of Worcester's part in sustaining the Union. Some hasty and unjust criticism followed its publication in consequence of certain errors made at the Adjutant-General's office, for which the author was not responsible. Most of these errors are corrected in the last edition. Histories of the Twenty-first, Twenty-fifth, Thirty-fourth and Thirty-sixth regiments have been published. *The Story of Company A, Twenty-fifth Regiment*, by Samuel H. Putnam, has been widely noticed and much commended as a true picture

of the daily life of a soldier. The history of the "Fighting Fifteenth" is now in course of preparation.

The memory of Worcester soldiers is kept green by two worthy memorials of stone and bronze on the Common. The marble monument to Colonel Timothy Bigelow of the Revolution was dedicated on the 19th of April, 1861, almost at the same hour that Massachusetts soldiers were pouring out their blood in the streets of Baltimore on that fateful day. The beautiful Soldiers' Monument further east on the same ground was erected in 1874 at a cost of over \$50,000. A tall brown-stone shaft in Rural Cemetery commemorates the bravery and life-sacrifice of General George B. Boomer, who fell at Champion Hill, May 22, 1863. The memory of Sergeant Plunkett, "The Armless Hero of Fredericksburg," is honored by a portrait in Mechanics Hall.

George H. Ward Post, No. 10, was organized April 13, 1865. Between two and three thousand members have joined this Post since its formation, and many thousand dollars have been dispensed in relief funds. The Women's Relief Corps and the Sons of Veterans were formed in 1883, and the Daughters of Veterans in 1890, all auxiliary to the Grand Army.

Of Worcester military companies, past and present, The Worcester Artillery was active from 1783 to 1838. The Independent Cadets, formed during the threatened war with France in 1798, disbanded soon after. The Light Infantry was organized in 1804. This company responded to the calls of the country in 1814 and 1861. It is now a part of the State militia. The Worcester Cavalry was in existence some twenty years, certainly from 1813 to 1826. The white silk flag of this company, now in the possession of Albert A. Lovell of Medfield, has the State arms and the mottoes: "God armeth the Patriot" and "For God and

Our Country" on one side, and "Worcester Cavalry, 1st Brigade, Sixth Division," on the other. The Worcester Rifle Corps, established in 1823, was disbanded in 1835. The City Guards, organized as the Harrison Guards in 1840, is now attached to the militia. It was in the three months' service in the Rebellion. A history of this company has recently been prepared by Lieutenant Samuel Hathaway. The Jackson Guards was an Irish company which was suppressed by Governor Gardner in Know-Nothing times. The Emmet Guards, formed in 1860, was in the three months' service in 1861, and is now a part of the State militia. The Chamberlain Light Battery ("Battery B, M. V. M."), is of more recent organization, and the Wellington Rifles is a militia company formed in 1894. The new Armory building, at the junction of Salisbury and Grove streets, was completed in 1890, at a cost of nearly \$125,000.

The State Guards, organized in 1861, will be remembered for the valuable service performed in war-time in doing escort duty at soldiers' funerals and on other necessary occasions. It was composed mostly of elderly men. This company made its last public appearance at the dedication of the Soldiers' Monument, July 15, 1874. The Worcester Continentals, the only independent company at present, paraded for the first time July 4, 1876. The uniform is nearly a fac-simile of that worn by revolutionary soldiers, and the company always attracts much attention, and has gained a wide reputation.