

# Dublin Historical Society

Dublin, New Hampshire 03444 • Founded 1920

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## DUBLIN MEN IN THE CIVIL WAR

### THE 14TH NEW HAMPSHIRE VOLUNTEERS



**Jesse Appleton Fisk.**

*This photograph from the Society's collection shows him as a sergeant in Co. 'A', 14th N.H. Volunteers.*

**W**ar has been defined as long periods of acute boredom punctuated by short periods of acute fright. The experience of the twenty-six men of Dublin who served in the Fourteenth Regiment of New Hampshire Volunteers provides an almost perfect illustration. The regiment spent almost three years in the Union army, but saw action on only two days. Those two days, however, were decisive for Gen. Philip Sheridan's Shenandoah campaign, and materially hastened Lee's ultimate surrender at Appomattox.

The 14th was one of three New Hampshire regiments recruited in September of 1862, in response to President Lincoln's call for 300,000 men for three-year enlistments. The confident optimism with which the war began had evaporated by August, after the Confederate victory at Second Bull Run (in which four Dublin men of the 6th N.H. were killed on the same day). It was clear that more troops would be needed to achieve a final victory.

New Hampshire was responsible for three regiments and each town was assigned a quota. (In the rare moments when it was up to strength, an infantry regiment of those days consisted of a thousand men: ten companies of a hundred each.) The towns in Cheshire County raised two companies, 'A' and 'G', of the 14th Regiment. Twelve Dublin men fetched up in Co. 'A', the others in that company being mainly from Keene, Hinsdale and Westmoreland. Another twelve Dubliners, recruited by Selectman Henry C. Piper, went to Co. 'G', along with recruits from Keene, Jaffrey and Stoddard.

In those days it was believed that men fought better beside their neighbors, and there was no thought of spreading the risk by separating family members. One pair of brothers from Dublin was in Co. 'A', Almon and Asaph

The **Winter Pot-luck Supper** will be held in the Vestry of the Community Church at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, February 15, 2008. (Snow date: February 22.)

A scroll will be presented in memory of **William L. Bauhan**, first President of the Society in its second incarnation.

**Dan Scully** will speak on the revised plans for the renovation of the Town Hall.

**Please bring a main dish, salad or dessert.**



Pierce, both of whom died of typhoid fever. There were two pairs in Co. 'G', Edson and George Hazen and Lewis and Marion Learned. As it happened, one brother from each pair was killed in action.

Another difference from today's army was that there was no rotation. Volunteers stayed with their companies for the full term of enlistment, unless they were killed, discharged for wounds or disease, or promoted into another unit. There was no such thing as home leave, except for the strange political leave given the 14th for the state elections in March, 1864 (see below).

In late September, 1862, the two Cheshire companies joined the rest of the regiment in Concord, where they were formally mustered into the service. On October 10 the regiment boarded a train for Philadelphia, marching across the city to another train for Baltimore, where they were issued two rounds of ammunition each, in case of trouble in that Southern-sympathizing city, and from there on to Washington.

#### A WINTER IN MARYLAND

The regiment arrived just when the constant threat to the capital from Lee's Army of Northern Virginia had been lifted by the Federal victory at Antietam. The 14th N.H. was brigaded with three other New England regiments and assigned to guard the Maryland bank of the Potomac. On the march out of Washington, some of the men began to feel the weight of their equipment. According to the regimental historian,

"The first halt was made in front of the White House, and at least one-third of the battalion took a vigorous account of stock. The men with bullet-proof vests - their hope and pride in Concord - vowed that they would prefer to risk the Rebel bullets rather than carry so much old iron any farther. Steel breastplates sufficient to coat a small gunboat were hurled into the gutter in front of Father Abraham's marble cottage. The members of Company G were wiser in their generation. They hired a job-team to carry their knapsacks. . ."

After two months of patrolling, the regiment went into win-

ter quarters at Poolesville, Maryland, some twenty miles northwest of Washington. It was there in January, 1863 that Dublin suffered its first loss by the death of Cpl. Asaph W. Pierce from typhoid fever. He was twenty-two.

In April the regiment marched back to Washington and occupied a camp in the northeastern suburbs. There it would remain for the rest of 1863, performing largely ceremonial duties in the capital - duties for which the men were required to wear white gloves. This seems to have invited the scorn of combat-hardened troops, causing some rather defensive words from the regimental historian:

"A slur upon a soldier, because he was enabled and ordered to dress somewhat like a gentleman, should never come from a comrade, . . . Some troops must perform such service, and the best troops were needed in Washington as well as at the front."

#### A POLITICAL FURLOUGH

At the beginning of 1864 the 14th had another experience that set it apart from most other units. It was an election year, the Democrats were agitating for an end to the war on any terms, and it seemed more than possible that President Lincoln would be defeated in November.

An informal poll indicated that a large majority of the regiment supported the President and the New Hampshire politicians favorable to his war policies. As a result, the whole unit was shipped back to Concord

and given a twelve-day furlough, so that they could vote in the local contests on town meeting day.

#### SPRING IN LOUISIANA

Reassembled in Concord, the regiment was carried by train to New York, where Cos. 'A' through 'G' were embarked on the side-wheeler "Daniel Webster" for a very uncomfortable three-week passage to New Orleans. Though intended for the Red River Campaign, the regiment arrived too late, and saw no action during its three months in Louisiana.

There were losses, however. Sgt. Almon Gowing Pierce of Dublin, whose brother had died of typhoid in Maryland, died of the same disease in Louisiana. (Another brother was Willard



*George Wheeler Hazen was killed in the Battle of Opequan and is buried in the Federal cemetery in Winchester, Va.*

Pierce, later well known as Dublin's bearded sage, and their great-nephew was E. Bertell Pierce, the Dublin Road Agent within living memory.)

During the Louisiana interlude, Jesse Appleton Fisk of Dublin, a sergeant in Co. 'A', was promoted to 2nd Lt. in Co. 'E' and later to 1st Lt. in Co. 'K'. He was a popular man, in an army that elected its own non-commissioned officers. As one of his fellow soldiers recorded:

"... both officers & men all desired he would remain in Co. A as he himself desired to remain. Indeed it was doubtful whether he would accept his first commission as a Lieut. His promotion was backed by every regimental officer . . ."

Jesse Fisk was the only Dubliner in the 14th to achieve commissioned rank.

In July, 1864, the 14th N.H. returned to New Orleans to embark once again on steamships. The regiment was divided, one contingent landing at the mouth of the James River on Chesapeake Bay and the others going on to Washington. The intention was to have the regiment, as part of the XIX Corps, reinforce Grant's Army of the Potomac. In the event, the XIX Corps was sent in August to join General Philip Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah, which was assigned to oppose the Confederates under Jubal Early in the fertile valley known as the breadbasket of the South.

The first part of September was occupied with marching and counter-marching; hard service, as an unnamed letter writer describes it:

"Our marches have been so hard and continued, day after day, many were bare foot when we arrived here and many had so worn their clothing that not much but rags remained."

Nevertheless, by September 18th the 14th had been in service for two years, almost to the day, without seeing combat.

### **THE BATTLE OF OPEQUAN CREEK – SEPTEMBER 19, 1864**

On the 19th of September Sheridan began a general movement westward toward Winchester. The ensuing battle, which Southerners called the Third Battle of Winchester, but Union troops the Battle of Opequan Creek, was an all-day fight. The 14th, on the right of the Federal line, first advanced but was repulsed.

"Only nine came out of the terrible charge unharmed, & I can hardly think how even we came off alive, so fearful was the storm of grape & canister & ball, ploughing the ground on every hand."

In the retreat, the regiment lost its colors, a terrible humiliation



**Almon Gowing Pierce,**  
*who died of typhoid in Louisiana, June 8, 1864.*

for those days, but it reformed, advanced again and played a not inglorious part in the ultimate rout of Jubal Early's Confederates.

Two Dublin men lost their lives on the field: Lt. Jesse A. Fisk and Cpl. George W. Hazen. A third, Albert C. Greenwood later died of wounds. Of Lt. Fisk's death the Regimental History records:

"Still another instance of clear grit was manifested . . . where Capt. Berry and Lieut. Fisk lay wounded. The latter informed the captain that he had got his death wound; yet he set himself to the task of stopping the cowardly shrieking of a soldier near by who was wounded, but not dangerously, in the leg."

Another account of Lt. Fisk's death is given by the anonymous writer, already quoted above, whose letter was read in what is now the Community Church at the memorial service for Jesse Fisk:

"He lived about two hours after a wound received in the lower part of his chest; the ground, meantime, was occupied by the rebels, who robbed him of everything; aside from robbing him the rebels were very kind, bringing him water several times; & doing him other service."

Lt. Fisk and Cpl. Hazen are buried in the Federal cemetery in Winchester, Virginia. Their names are carved on an obelisk (not unlike our own Civil War monument) erected in memory of the 43 members of the 14th N.H. who were buried there after Opequan.

### THE BATTLE OF CEDAR CREEK – OCTOBER 19TH, 1864

On September 22, Sheridan directed a flanking movement to drive Early from the height of Fisher's Hill, near Strasburg. During this brief engagement the 14th N.H., as part of the XIX Corps, were part of a diversionary feint, and saw no significant action.

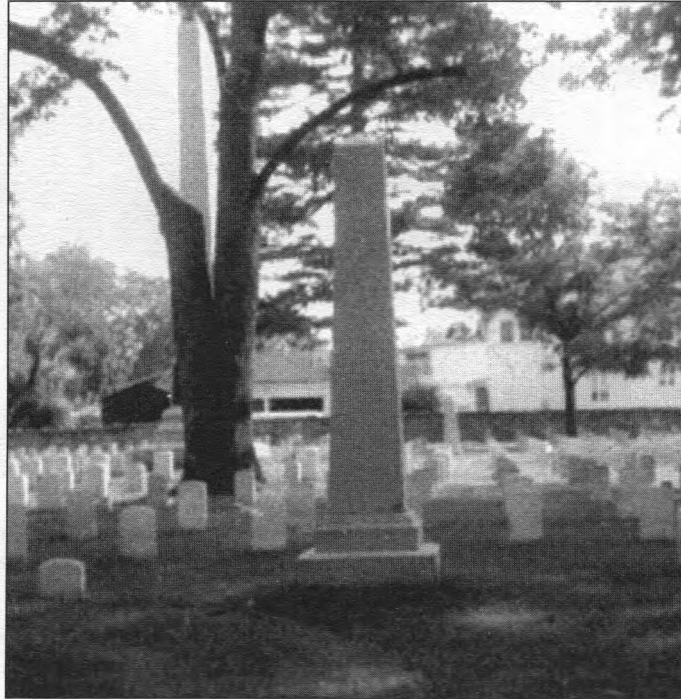
The Confederate forces retired southward up the valley. There followed a period of cavalry skirmishes, during which Sheridan burned the valley's farms with their ripening crops. This was not merely wanton destruction; it deprived the Confederates of a major source of food, and is credited with shortening the war.

To avoid a pitched battle, Early retired into the Blue Ridge until he received reinforcements from Lee's army. Then in the small hours of October 19th, exactly a month after Opequan, the Confederates surprised the Union troops asleep in their camp near Middletown. The immediate result was a general rout, in which the 14th retreated four miles by midday.

General Sheridan had been in Washington, conferring with his superiors, and got back as far as Winchester on the night of October 18th. Next morning, receiving word of the Confederate attack, he galloped off on his celebrated ride "from Winchester twenty miles away" (fifteen really) to the front where, arriving in late morning, he rallied his troops and led them to a decisive victory. The Regimental history, never given to understatement, asks rhetorically:

" [W]here is there a parallel to Cedar Creek . . . ? An army surprised in the night, beaten, routed, driven from the field . . . yet on the same day, with the re-enforcement of only one man, fighting against more troops than whipped them in the morning, . . . camping in the old lines at night; finally scourging with the last terrible and irresistible besom of war the armies of rebellion forever from the fair Valley of the Shenandoah? "

Two Dublin men lost their lives at Cedar Creek. One was Cpl. Lewis D. Learned of Co. 'G', aged 23, who died on the field as the result of a bullet in the chest. He was the elder brother of Henry Dwight Learned, first president of the Dublin Historical Society. Cpl. Learned's body was returned to Dublin, where he lies in the cemetery. The other was Cpl. Samuel P. Holt of Co. 'A', who died of wounds four days later in Winchester, and is buried there. He had recently passed his twentieth birthday.



*Memorial in the Federal cemetery in Winchester, Va., to the men of the 14th N.H. who died at the Battle of Opequan and are buried there. The names of Jesse Appleton Fisk and George Wheeler Hazen are carved on this stone.*

(Photograph by Hildreth M. Allison.)

### ANTICLIMAX

In early January, 1865, the 14th was among the last regiments of Sheridan's army to leave the Shenandoah Valley. After traveling by train to Baltimore, it once again embarked on a steamer, bound this time for occupation duty in Savannah. Their stay there lasted until July, interrupted only by a march to Augusta and back. The regiment then embarked once more for a sea voyage to Boston, whence they traveled by train to Concord.

On July 27th, 1865, the 14th New Hampshire Volunteer Regiment was paid off and disbanded, having served two years, ten months and four days – 1,036 days, on only two of which it fought. But those two days' fighting were battles that made history.

– P.R.B. & J.W.H.

**Note:** Most of the information for this article comes from the regimental history: Buffum, Francis H., *A Memorial of the Great Rebellion; Being a History of The Fourteenth Regiment New-Hampshire Volunteers*, Boston, 1882. Some quotations are from letters read as part of a sermon preached by the Rev. William F. Bridge at the memorial service for Lt. Jesse A. Fisk, November 27, 1864. A fully annotated version of this article is on file at the Society's archives.

### C R E D I T S

This issue of the Dublin Historical Society Newsletter was edited by John Harris.

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