

“Westerly” and the Civil War

Today we think of West Roxbury as one of the districts of Boston. 150 years ago West Roxbury was an independent town made up of five sections, the Eastern District, Canterbury, South Street Crossing, Germantown and the Western District. The Germantown and Western Districts were commonly called “Westerly”.

At the onset of the Civil War West Roxbury was a ten-year-old town of about 12,000 inhabitants. The eastern section (Jamaica Plain) was more populated with some industry and many houses. The other districts (Roslindale and West Roxbury) made up the greater landmass and were sparsely populated agrarian communities.

Like most Massachusetts towns West Roxbury was an “Abolitionist Town” that supported the president’s cause of preserving the union and ending slavery. At a town meeting in 1862 a proposal was made to lay- out a new road in the town when John C. Pratt, a prominent citizen of the eastern district, rose and suggested that, “the only road desirable to be opened at present time is the road to Richmond”. The townsmen agreed and appropriated \$86,000 to the war effort. An addition \$22,000 was pledged from private contributions.

The woman of the town formed a Soldiers Aid Society, which raised \$8,000 as well as purchased equipment, made bandages and wrote letters to soldiers. In a letter of thanks from Col. Robert Gould Shaw, housed in the West Roxbury Historical Society Room, to the committee chairwoman:

*44 Beacon St.
March 3, 1862*

Dear Madam,

As I was entirely ignorant, this afternoon, of the means at the disposal of the friends of the coloured regiment, when I saw at Mrs. [Jane] Litchfield’s, I felt some delicacy about mentioning what my men are really in want of – but it might be to much- Each Company needs a cooking range – they cost \$45 – a piece ...

.... I think money spent in this way would do no more good than any other – If you think this too expensive a thing to undertake please say nothing of it to the committee ...

*Yours very respectfully,
Robert G. Shaw*

The members of the Second Church of Roxbury, (later it was renamed the First Church of West Roxbury), located at the corner of Church St. and Centre St, were no strangers to the abolitionist movement. Their minister, Theodore Parker (1810-1860) began his ministry in 1837 at the Second Church of Roxbury. It was a small congregation of about sixty adults, which gave him time to read write and visit neighbors. He often was involved in controversies for both his religious and social philosophy. After leaving West Roxbury in 1846, for a larger audience in Boston, Reverend Parker would go onto

become one of the nations most recognized abolitionist. He died in Florence Italy from tuberculosis in 1860.

As in all wars the greatest contribution given were those that served. There were 720 men enlisted from the Town of West Roxbury. Not all were residents some were drifters; some were conscribed and others came from the process of towns selling extra recruits to different towns. For example, if Dedham had extra recruits they would sell them to another town that was having difficulty filling their quota.

Of the 720 men credited to the town 46 were killed or died of a disease they contracted while in the service. Some of these veterans were from the western district and are buried at the small Westerly Burial Ground on Centre St. there are fourteen Civil War Veterans buried or memorialized, such as;

Harper Brothers

Charles, a carpenter, was a private with the 1st Mass Volunteer Regiment (5-23-61 to 10-11-62) he was wounded at 2nd Bull Run and would die at home on December 26, 1862 at 26 years old from complications from the wound. His younger brother

Joseph, was also a Private in the 1st Mass Regiment (5-23-61 to death), he died May 17, 1862 age 18 at the Battle of Williamsburg, VA. where he is buried. His name is inscribed on his brother's headstone in the family plot.

Henry D. Smith, the son of Humphrey and Wealthy (Bosworthy) Smith. He was a 29-year-old carpenter who lived on his fathers' Spring St. farm. In 1853 from Baker St. to the Charles River was annexed to the town of West Roxbury some of these residents kept their ties to Dedham. The Smith's remained members of the First Parish of Dedham. In 1861 Henry joined the 18th Mass Regiment, which was a Dedham regiment. He was killed August 30, 1862 at the battle of 2nd Bull Run. It was their first fight, 170 men from the regiment were killed. Interestingly theirs is the only plot that still has a fence around it. During World War II many of the fences were removed for the war effort. There is evidence that three or four other plot had theirs removed.

William Marsh Draper, the son of Dr. Abijah Draper Jr., whose home was, located on Centre St at Park St. He was studying medicine at start of the Civil War and chose to enlist in the infantry in October 1861; due to a disability he was release one year later. But he was determined to play a role in the war and in 1864 at the age of 24 he was appointed the druggist for the 22nd Mass Regiment. He then became a Hospital Steward at the Army Sq. Hospital in Washington, D.C. where his father Abijah was a civilian surgeon. He was released at Washington D C. in 1867. He returned home with serious health issues and died at his father's home from "disease of the spine" on July 19, 1870.

William H. Hutchins was another member of the 1st Mass Regiment who served from October 1862 until September 1864. He returned to the Spring St. home of his father

Enoch, who was the station bagageman at the West Roxbury Station. Soon after his return he married and moved to Waltham. He was a salesman at the Mercantile Market in Boston. On April 4, 1870 he died from Consumption, which was the number one killer of returning Civil War veterans.

In 1861 the site of Brook Farm was converted into Camp Andrews, named for then Governor John A. Andrews. It was used as the training camp for the 2nd Mass Volunteer Infantry Regiment; the Regiment that Robert Gould Shaw first served as an officer. Shaw, who as a boy lived in West Roxbury for about five years, trained here as a Lieutenant before he was appointed Colonel of the all black 54th Regiment that trained at Camp Meigs, Hyde Park. Shortly after the 2nd Mass mustered in May 1861 thirty years old Pvt. Duncan Finlayson of Barnstable, MA drowned (6-2-1862) in the Charles River and was laid to rest at Westerly, the village burial ground.

There were others that returned to West Roxbury and had a productive lives such as Cornelius Attwood and Augustus Jordan.

Cornelius Attwood, was born in Maine July 1838. He was a Captain with the 25th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry and was promoted several times reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel as a member of General Ambrose Burnside's staff. He was wounded on June 6, 1864 at Cold Harbor Va. and was released due to his wounds on August 18, 1864. In 1865 he married Eleanor (?) and they had 8 children, one of his son was named Ambrose Burnside in honor of his former military leader. They purchased the old Isaiah Richards home on Bellevue St, which was later torn down to build four smaller houses at the corner of Rutledge Rd. He was promoted to General in the Massachusetts Militia and was elected to the post of Quartermaster of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) from 1871 to 1873. This was a national organization of Union War Veterans. They held "Encampment" every year and were active in getting veterans benefits and helped to establish the Memorial Day holiday. He worked for Mutual Life Insurance of New York before he died suddenly in January 1888 he is buried at Mt. Benedict where there is a large obelisk monument with a military motif of cross and sword draped with a flag and a single star in his honor.

Augustus Jordan, born January 13, 1839 the son of Sarah (Hooper) and Chancy Jordan, the village shoemaker whose shop was on LaGrange St. next to the West Roxbury Station where he later became the stationmaster. Augustus served with the 42nd Mass Regiment. He first enlisted in 1862 at the rank of Sergeant. He completed his tour in July of 1863. One year later he re-enlisted from July to November of 1864. After the war he worked his way up from a bank teller to an officer of the Maverick Savings Bank. He then worked for the Shawmut National Bank until his retirement in 1921 He was active as

a Mason and became a chartered member for all his work. He also was active in the community especially with the West Roxbury Congregational Church where he headed the Building Committee that was responsible for the construction of their church at the corner of Centre and Mt. Vernon St in 1891. He had a large house built at the corner of Mt. Vernon St. and Montview St. He was an active member of the GAR and held Memorial Day Dedications at Westerly Cemetery for many years. He died in 1924 at the age of 85.

In 1870 the town voted to appropriate \$15,000 to erect a monument to the men of the town who lost their lives in the “Rebellion of 1861-1865”. It resides in Jamaica Plain section; at that time this was the seat of the Town of West Roxbury. Town Hall was located on the current site of Curtis Hall Municipal Building.

Designed by architect W. W. Lummis. Using a gothic style, with the base made of Quincy granite and the superstructure made of Clarks Island granite. It stands 34 feet high with a seven foot Infantryman statue at the top. In the center is an Italian Marble monument with twenty-three names inscribed under the inscription “In memory of the men of West Roxbury who died in the service of their country during the Rebellion of 1861 – 1865”. Constructed by Nelson Curtis, a local mason who had been used by the town for many other projects.

September 14, 1871, a sunny warm late summer day, was declared a town holiday and all business were closed so that the people of the town could attend the dedication ceremonies. Among those present for the dedication were, Governor William Claflin, town officials, members of the GAR, family members of the deceased, such as Joseph and Abigail Harper, and James Freeman Clarke, the keynote speaker. Over 500 townspeople, including all of the school children throughout the town, attend the ceremony. George F. Woodman, Chairman of the Building Committee welcomed the citizens, in his opening remarks he tells the audience that “while a much larger number fell who were accredited upon the quota of this town, the Committee have only recorded the names of those who were *actual residents of West Roxbury at the time of their enlistment*”. He goes on to say “this Monument is simply what it was intended to be – an affectionate memorial to our heroic dead.”

James Freeman Clarke, a minister in Boston who purchased the Brook Farm site in 1855, told the audience that it is not a monument to victory but a reminder to the people of the town of the sacrifice that these men made. In a reference to the Second Mass Volunteers that trained at Camp Andrews, he calls them “the greatest crop raised at Brook Farm” The following list of names are inscribed on the stone in the center of the monument.

RAN	NAME	REGIME	DEAT	CAUSE
Bri ^g .	Thomas J. C. Amorv	17 th Mass		Yellow Fever @ N.C.
Lt.	Lucius Manlius Sargent	1st Mass.	12/09/1	killed Belfield Va.
Cant.	Wm. Blackstone	2nd Mass.	08/09/1	killed Cedar Mt. Va.
Cant.	Wm. H. Simpkins	54th Mass	07/18/1	killed Fort Wagner
Cant.	Wm. F. Cochran	28th Mass	05/18/1	of wound at
Adiu	Henry M. Bond	20th	05/14/1	killed Va.
Lt.	Charles H. Russell	12th	07/02/1	killed Gettvsburg Pa.
Lt.	Alfred R. Glover	58th	06/14/1	killed Port Hudson
Sgt.	Charles H. Manning	45th Mass	06/21/1	died Newbern N.C.
Sgt.	Charles A. Brazier	1st Mass.	05/05/1	killed Williamsburg
Corn	Levi Lincoln	9th Mass	06/18/1	killed Petersburg Va.
Pvt.	James F. Gilson	9th Mass	07/02/1	killed Gettvsburg Pa.
Pvt.	James W. Thomas	56th	07/186	died Andersonville
Pvt.	Charles H. Stearns	11th	07/21/1	killed Bull Run Va.
Pvt.	Charles A. Harner	1st Mass.	10/23/1	died W. Roxbury
Pvt.	Joseph Harner	1st Mass.	05/17/1	died Williamsburg
Pvt.	Thomas A. Baker	1st Mass.	03/26/1	died in hospital
Pvt.	Horace Goodwin	35th Mass	09/17/1	died Antietam Md.
Pvt.	John Burke	3rd Mass	09/18/1	died in hospital
Pvt.	Munroe George	41st Mass	05/14/1	died Brashear City
Pvt.	Curtis W. Grover	1st Mass.	05/05/1	killed Williamsburg
Pvt.	Michael Dolan	28th Mass	09/17/1	killed Antietam Md.
Pvt.	Edward Norton	28th Mass	09/01/1	killed Chantilly Va.

Most of the 675 returning veterans credited to the town would pick up their lives and go on. Some remained in the town, others moved on to other towns or states so it is impossible to know what became of them. A few years after the dedication the town voted to annex to the City of Boston as the district of West Roxbury, Ward 23. Today the monument not only serves as a reminder of the sacrifice of these men but a reminder of when West Roxbury was a town.