

ROCHESTER HISTORY

Edited by Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck

City Historian

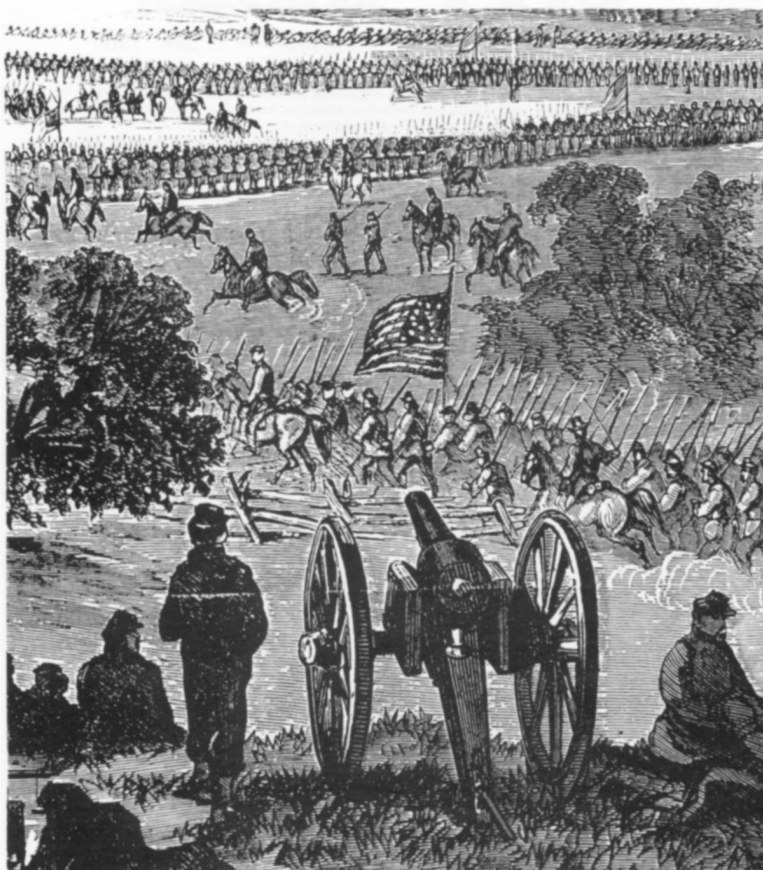
Vol. LIII

Spring, 1991

No. 2

The Civil War Draft in Rochester Part Two

by Donald M. Fisher



A PROCLAMATION

Whereas, Intelligence has been received of the DEATH,
BY ASSASSINATION, of

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

President of the United States, and also an attempt to de-
stroy the life of

WM. H. SEWARD,

Secretary of State, with the view, no doubt, of depriving the
Nation of its leading rulers, in the hope of producing
general anarchy,

Now, therefore, at the suggestion of many influential citizens, and in accordance
with my own feelings, I request the Citizens of Rochester to assemble in the

CITY HALL,

AT 3 O'CLOCK THIS AFTERNOON --- APRIL 15th,

To take such action and give expression to such sentiments as may seem proper on
the extraordinary and mournful occasion, regarding an event unparalleled in the history
of our Republic, and which has caused so sudden a transition from triumphant
rejoicing to deep and unavailing grief and lamentation.

Furthermore, I respectfully request that all places of business be closed from 12 o'clock, M., until
3 o'clock P. . . . thus recognizing the dispensation of Providence, and honoring the Patriotic, Honest and
Faithful Ruler of the People and Lover of his Country who is no more.

The City Hall and other Bells of the City will be tolled between the hours of 12 and 1 o'clock.

D. D. T. MOORE, Mayor.

ROCHESTER, April 15th, 1865.

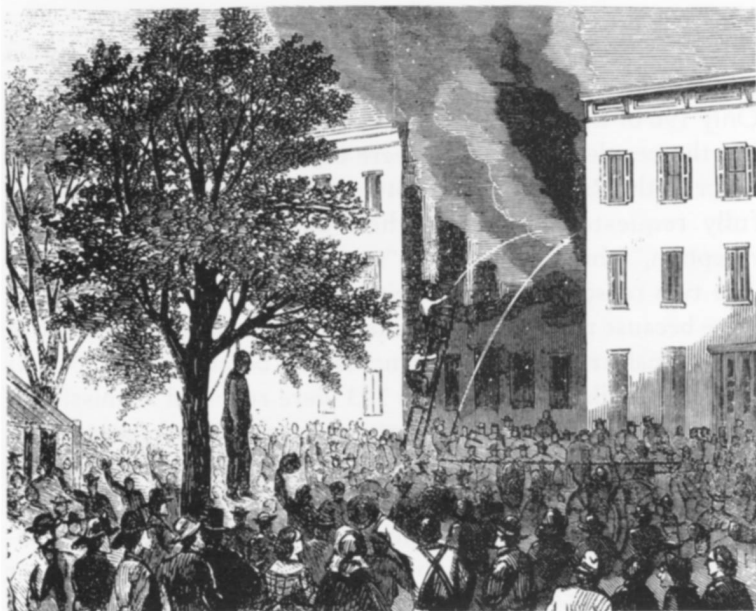
*Above: A proclamation by Rochester Mayor D.D.T. Moore following
President Lincoln's assassination. Rochester Public Library.*

*Cover: Detail of a panoramic scene of The Battle at Gettysburg, Pa. drawn by
Edwin Forbes for Frank Leslies Weekly July 18, 1863. The Battle was fought
July 1, 2 and 3, 1863. Rochester Public Library.*

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Rochester officials feared draft riots in Rochester like those in New York City. On July 15, 1863, a black man was hanged at 32nd Street between 6th and 7th Avenues and numerous fires were set. *Frank Leslie's Weekly*, August 1, 1863; Rochester Public Library.

1863: The First Year of National Conscription

When the National Enrollment Act was issued in March 1863, Rochester, like other Northern communities, was primarily against national conscription. It was not until July that the 28th Congressional District learned of its first national conscription quota of 2,015 men.⁶³ With this quota, the people of the district realized that they had an imposing goal to attain. Almost immediately, the local Republican newspaper, the *Rochester Daily Democrat and American*, supported the draft. Referring to the men of Rochester, the *Democrat* wrote:

He must else be prepared to renounce his ordinary vocation, exchange his civic costume for a soldier's outfit, report at the rendezvous, and take to the manual of arms and hard tack with as little wincing as the state of his feelings will allow. . . . The insurrection is on its last legs and is to be effectively crushed in less than ninety days. We believe the draft is the last feather which is to break the rebel dromedary's "back bone." Wait and see.⁶⁴

Another significant episode during the first half of 1863 was on May 2, when the 13th Regiment finally came back to Rochester. Only 190 of the regiment's original roster of 780 men returned, but the people of Rochester were eager to see their arrival. By order of the Reception Committee, "citizens are (were) respectfully requested to display their national flags during the reception," which had attracted "many thousands of spectators."⁶⁵ The two reasons that the regiment's complement was so low were because many of the regiment's men had reenlisted or had been transferred to other regiments, and because about 85 of its men were killed in action and 103 were reported as missing.⁶⁶ This return, plus the constant telegraph news reports from battles with relatively high casualty rates, made the people of Rochester experience the consequences of war that most other northern cities went through. This continual inflow of information helped to make the average man of drafting age fear war as the conflict grew, and most probably had an impact on his decision to avoid a term with the army by exercising the substitution and commutation clauses of the Enrollment Act.

Yet another incident that had an effect on the people of Rochester in 1863 was the burial of Colonel Patrick O'Rorke, commander of Rochester's own 140th Regiment. It was his death that drove home the notion that no one was exempt from death. O'Rorke, killed at the Battle of Gettysburg, was a popular Rochesterian who had graduated first in his class at West Point in 1861, and was grieved by Protestants and Catholics alike at his funeral on July 15, 1863.⁶⁷ A "spectator" noted in the *Union* of O'Rorke's funeral:

Long before the hour appointed for the service the streets, in every direction, leading to the church were crowded with people, whilst in its immediate neighborhood were to be seen hundreds of persons all anxious to secure admission.⁶⁸

O'Rorke's funeral contributed to a bond between some elements of the differing ethnic and religious communities within Rochester that lasted past the end of the war. Although O'Rorke contributed to the victory at Gettysburg in life, in death he ". . . helped to forge a new unity in Rochester where citizens of all backgrounds and all faiths joined in the ceremony conducted in his honor at St. Bridget's Catholic Church."⁶⁹

It was also during the early half of 1863 that a somewhat hostile and competitive press war existed between Rochester's three main newspapers, the *Union*, a Democratic paper; the *Democrat*, a

Republican paper; and the *Rochester Evening Express*, a radical Republican paper. Of course, the one issue that was increasing in importance to the newspapers' editors and their respective readers was national conscription. University of Rochester Professor Isaac Butts, who wrote editorials for the *Union*, was opposed to national conscription because he believed it was a violation of states' rights and aligned with other newspapers supported by the Democratic Party that were against conscription.⁷⁰

All three of the major papers also began to support the idea of using black troops in the Union Army. They not only knew that their white readers, many of whom were eligible to be drafted, would agree, but they also knew it was a form of political recognition for Rochester resident and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who encouraged the enrollment of blacks into the army.⁷¹ Indeed, Douglass was successful in personally recruiting hundreds of blacks, including his own sons, for the Union Army from a wide variety of areas.⁷² As for the rest of the relatively small black community in the Rochester area, not much attention was given to recruiting black soldiers, although some blacks did serve as either enlistees or substitutes throughout the last two years of the war in the Union Army's black regiments.⁷³

As spring turned into summer, 1863 proved to be the first year extreme discontent was experienced in the various communities in the North, including Rochester. The cause for the disquiet concerned not only the war in general, but the issue of conscription in particular. Nowhere was the anger shown more violently than in New York City from July 13-16. The infamous draft riots, led by immigrant Irish Democrats who felt they were being victimized by the Republican-dominated federal government's draft policies, were directed against blacks who were feared by the Irish for possible future dilution of the labor market if slavery was ended. Eventually the riots had to be put down by infantry and artillery units from the Army of the Potomac, fresh from the Battle of Gettysburg, which accounted for "at least 105" deaths, a toll five times larger than any pre-war riot in New York City.⁷⁴

As for Rochester, the draft riots seen in downstate New York, and in other Northern cities such as Boston, never occurred in the Flour City. One possible reason for the lack of a riot, if one examines the New York City riot, is perhaps the relatively small black population of Rochester, which was only 410, less than one

percent of the city's total.⁷⁵ Blacks were also feared by the Irish in Rochester, but the *Democrat* attempted to put to rest their concerns in an editorial entitled "Negro Competition":

Among the fallacies which have contributed in no small degree to foster the prejudices of the ignorant against the negro, is an idea that the latter may become a formidable competitor with the white laborer of the North. This notion has wedded a large proportion of our foreign-born population--particularly the Irish--to the pro-slavery party. . . . Unfortunately for themselves, as well as for the country generally, a very large number of our laboring men have, without studying the question themselves, accepted as correct, the opinion that should slavery be abolished the North would suddenly be overrun with negroes, who of course would become competitors in the labor market. A more irrational idea can scarcely be conceived.⁷⁶

In an attempt to curb any form of violence that might occur in Rochester, by explaining the end result of a riot, the *Union* stated in an editorial:

If there be, as we trust there are not, any persons here or elsewhere contemplating violent resistance to the conscription act we beg of them to pause and reflect upon the inevitable result of such a movement. Let them learn a lesson from the riots which have disgraced eastern cities this week. . . . The lives, and property, and interests of the whole community are stripped of all protection the moment law and order are struck down; and hence the great body of the community will ever be found arrayed against popular violence, and, cooperating with local, state and general governments and all their resources, will certainly in every instance put it down in the end. . . . There is only one safe and sensible course open to those affected by the conscription act, and that is to appeal to the Courts for justice if it is believed to be constitutional.⁷⁷

The Catholic Church also attempted to prevent any mob violence in Rochester by having a letter from Bishop John Timon of Buffalo read in all of the diocese's churches that urged anyone contemplating violence or resistance to law to refrain.⁷⁸ The purpose of the letter was to appeal to the Irish and Democratic sub-communities within the area.

It was also during this month of July that men from around the State of New York wrote letters to Secretary of State William H. Seward offering advice concerning the draft riots. Nine letters,

including some from upstate New York communities in Onondaga Valley, Utica and Rochester, were received by Seward and then forwarded to Secretary of War Stanton.⁷⁹ The letters offered a range of options as to what the federal government should do regarding the riots. In a letter dated July 17, 1863, former Rochester-area Congressman Thomas J. Patterson wrote:

Already the devils that make mobs (and they are numerous in this city) are loud in their declarations that the draft is ended in New York, and will be resisted if attempted here. Stop the draft in New York, and I doubt if it can be enforced in any city in the State. Here it is certain a mob would resist, be the consequences what they may. Enforce it in New York, and resistance to it is ended elsewhere.⁸⁰

Of course, the riots were put down in New York City and the draft was resumed there and throughout the state. With the riot put down in New York City, perhaps the people of Rochester were convinced that any action against the draft would have been futile.

The city government of Rochester also attempted not only to prevent mass disorder, but also to add a sense of fairness to the controversial draft issue. Many Rochesterians were opposed to conscription not merely because it may have been an infringement on their civil rights, but because the draft procedure was perceived to discriminate against the poor. Some also saw commutation as simply a way for the federal government to levy money to increase funds available for bounty payments to future enlistees. The *Union* wrote:

Upon what theory, we should like to know, was the \$300 exemption clause enacted, if not upon that the money so paid should be in lieu of a substitute and be applied by the government towards rewarding some person who would fill the place of the man tendering it?⁸¹

At a city council meeting, the *Democrat* reported that Alderman James Upton addressed the issue of commutation and said "it is not considered any too patriotic in individuals to fall back on this money privilege, and it seemed to him shameful for the city to encourage it."⁸²

Furthermore, some citizens were angered over the procedure of the draft relating to commutation. The second provision of the Enrollment Act stated "that 'a drafted man cannot pay commutation money or present a substitute after he has reported himself to the Board of Enrollment for examination.'"⁸³ In other

words, the federal government was declaring that a man could only exercise the substitution or commutation clauses before or on the day of his enrollment examination. Many argued that this did not coincide with the draft procedure in actual practice, where a man should be drafted, examined, and then declared either exempt or "able-bodied." If the decision was of the latter, a draftee would theoretically be able to enter the service, provide a substitute, or commute. Basically, some saw the Enrollment Act's second provision as a way of forcing men to either gamble early and seek a substitute, or pay the \$300 commutation fee, or take their chances, go through the examination, and try to get a medical exemption. The *Union* said the provision was,

. . . simply and plainly absurd. . . This regulation is clearly wrong and unjust, and if it is to be enforced, provision should be made so that persons may establish their non-liability before reporting themselves.⁸⁴

It was at this time that the Rochester Common Council wanted to address the financial strains some people faced when trying to avoid conscription. The council believed the practices of substitution and commutation were not fair to the poor, as entire northern communities were able to "escape" the draft. The Common Council attempted to borrow money to pay out \$300 to any man who was drafted and entered the service, to a substitute, or to the federal government as commutation if an individual would not go into the army or was unable to secure a substitute.⁸⁵ As the *Union* noted:

Let the Alderman act discreetly in this manner and secure the end desired--relief for those who will be really oppressed by the draft, and they may rely upon the support of all fair minded citizens, and Rochester will maintain its good name as a city of law abiding people, while sister cities will be convulsed and disgraced by outrages upon persons and property.⁸⁶

The next day, the Common Council resolved that it would "assume the burden" of national conscription in Rochester by agreeing to raise a \$207,000 relief fund.⁸⁷ It said that with the Conscription Act of 1863,

. . . the extraordinary burdens of replenishing our armies will fall on a class of men least able to bear such burdens, instead of falling on the property of the whole country, as in our judgement they ought . . .⁸⁸

Although banks refused to loan the money, the council was eventually able to raise enough money to satisfy the original bounties for conscripts or substitutes, but not for those who wanted to commute.⁸⁹ By the end of this first draft, the district spent almost \$245,000 on non-federal bounties.⁹⁰

With knowledge of the New York City draft riots fresh in the minds of Rochesterians, the Union Army's first official national draft finally began in Rochester on August 5, 1863. In an attempt to provide basic information concerning the draft for everyone, especially for the "common man," the *Democrat* printed a series of questions and answers. For example:

Q. - What is to be done with "us" drafted men?

A. - We shall be distributed among the old regiments in the field, probably those raised from this district, where we are well acquainted and will meet friends who are glad to welcome us.⁹¹

For the most part, the draft was conducted without any notable disorder, though some still resented the draft in general.⁹² Others, such as *Penfield Extra* editor "Little Nellie" Williams, believed that the draft would end in a failure.⁹³ On August 13, 1863, Williams published 66 names of "those who drew a prize in the Grand National Scheme" and wrote:

It is believed by many that the draft will not fetch one conscript from Penfield, they are about all able to cash up, and them that is not able have gone to Canada after substitutes.⁹⁴

A meeting was held in Rochester on August 15 for those who were conscripted, and, although criticism was expressed, it was conducted in a relatively orderly manner.⁹⁵ An August 17 *Union* editorial tried to summarize the feelings of many with:

The practical workings of the conscription law demonstrate most clearly that the only equitable and patriotic method of meeting the requirements of the government is for each community to accept and shoulder the money alternative offered by the act. . . . There is neither principle, patriotism, nor any kindred virtue in the whole thing. Money is the basis of the conscripts action as it is the basis of the law. The whole draft is therefore in effect a lottery to see what men of a certain class shall pay \$300 or less towards carrying on the war, and a press gang to force into the ranks of the army a chance number of poverty stricken citizens.⁹⁶

In other words, the *Union* was trying to illustrate a growing belief throughout the North: no man should have to enter the army because he could not afford to pay the substitution or commutation fees.

Throughout the weeks after the August draft call, there was a question pertaining to Rochester's quota. While Rochesterians were adamant about having their cumulative excess in state draft troop quotas carry over to the new national draft quotas, the federal government did not have an official policy. In a letter from Rochester area Congressman Alfred Ely to the city's Common Council, Ely tried to make an assurance to Rochester, after speaking with Provost Marshal General James Barnet Fry:

The Provost Marshal General of the United States decides that he will give credit for every man enlisted from every town or ward in our Congressional District in excess of the quota appointed to that town or ward upon previous calls, and also persons enlisted subsequent to the tenth day of November last, . . .⁹⁷

In addition to complaining about the federal government's response to Rochester's argument that it had supplied an excess in troops, the people of Rochester also alleged that they were not being given enough time to fill the quota. As the *Union* believed that the Rochester area was one of the leading districts in terms of supplying the Union Army with men, it kept in line with its Democratic supporters by writing:

Do not let us ever say anything more of the tyranny and injustice of European powers,--of the cruelty of Russia to Poland or of Austria to Hungary. The conduct of these powers is mild compared with the course of this same Lincoln administration toward any State or District which happens to incur the ill will of the low lived, malignant creatures it has placed in responsible positions.⁹⁸

Furthermore, the *Union* believed that Rochester did not owe the government any more men, and that it was unfair for the federal government to seek new recruits.⁹⁹

Even though many Rochesterians believed that an additional draft was unnecessary, especially for their area, the federal government went through with its conscription in the 28th provost marshal district. Rochester's Common Council voted to pay \$300 bounties to conscripts who either went into the army or secured a substitute.¹⁰⁰ At the end of the draft, the 28th district supplied 370 soldiers, mostly substitutes, and 440 commutation

fees of \$300 each, out of the 3,265 names drawn; the rest of the men were either exempted or rejected for various reasons¹⁰¹ (see Appendix I). As for the process of filling the quota in the Rochester area, the names of drafted men were selected during the first two weeks of August, and then examinations took place throughout the rest of the month and into September. Eventually, the quota was filled.

It was at the end of the Union Army's first national draft that the people of Rochester began to realize the implications of the commutation option. The *Union* noted in its September 15 edition that so much money had been paid to the federal government for commutations that,

So far as the city is concerned and the towns of Monroe Co., no more commutations can be paid. The time for Monroe conscripts to avoid service by payment of commutation is at an end. They must be exempted for cause, furnish substitutes, or go with the army.¹⁰²

Although commutation payments did continue, most Rochesterians, and the rest of the North for that matter, came to the conclusion that too much money was being raised, and not enough men were entering the army's ranks. While the commutation clause had been included as a means for allowing men a "back door" to "escape" the draft for whatever reason, everyone realized that the option was being abused. While many called the draft a failure for various reasons, commutation was often cited. It was perceived to be such a failure that another draft was in the planning stages by mid-September.¹⁰³ In what many thought was a federal government ploy to get poor men who had previously paid commutation fees of \$300 to enlist in the second draft, the War Office declared that,

. . . every man who has paid \$300 exemption is liable under every draft ordered just as if he had never been drafted.¹⁰⁴

While Rochesterians realized that commutation was exercised regularly in the area, this fact, accompanied by the point that other districts were given more time to either fill their quotas or seek commutation payments, angered Rochesterians. This was true as it was soon learned in late September that the federal government was still pushing Rochester to recruit more men, while the 28th district had already accounted for over one-fourth (\$131,700 of a total \$500,000) of all commutation payments to Washington, D.C. for the entire North up to that time.¹⁰⁵ The *Union* angrily wrote:

The impression no doubt prevails at Washington that the 28th Congressional District . . . is the richest and most prosperous in the Union--that its resources in men and money are boundless, and that both may be drawn *ad libitum*. These counties were among the first to respond to the call for men and money when the rebellion commenced and they have not only filled up every quota, but largely exceeded each demand made. When the draft came no favor was shown the District--it was put upon a level or pushed ahead of others which had done next to nothing in furnishing men and money. . . . Is not this bearing down pretty hard on a single district? What have our people done that they should be singled out as the special objects of exaction by the Federal Government?¹⁰⁶

In sum, the first year of national conscription showed that the strains of war increasingly continued to be felt in Rochester, as casualty reports mounted. The riots that plagued other northern cities were avoided in Rochester, probably due to the fact that conscription was not to begin until weeks after other riots had already been put down. The people of Rochester continued to see the draft as unfair, and soon realized that while the first-ever national draft failed in raising conscripts, the problems concerning commutation were shown.



*Roswell Hart,
Provost Marshal.*



Rochester tried unsuccessfully to suspend the draft to focus on repairs following the flood of 1865. Looking south on Front Street after the swift waters receded, the damage is visible. Rochester Public Library.

The Need For More Men

With the passing of 1863 and the continuance of the war, the federal government issued further troop requests in 1864 as increasing numbers of men were needed for new campaigns. Recruiting, substitute and bounty brokers all became quite active at this time as the qualified men for army service that were available dwindled in relation to military manpower needs. The *Union* said of the brokers:

They are scouring the face of the earth, taking everything white that has a head, trunk and limbs, and everything black that is a degree above a baboon, to market.¹⁰⁷

As it was common for different communities to quarrel over where men enlisted, Rochester and the rest of the 28th Congressional District were no exception.

An argument, between Rochester and the rest of the district's townships, arose as to which communities would be given credit for raising volunteers who had enlisted in the city of Rochester. Most officials knew that men enlisted wherever they could get the largest bounties without consideration for their own permanent residence, which gave ascent to the term "floating population." In an effort to remain competitive and keep its men from leaving, the Town of Penfield raised its bounties from the \$46 amount it paid out during the summer of 1862 to \$500 by the summer of 1864.¹⁰⁸ Various town and county authorities believed that the entire district should share in the acclamation for any recruits, as the whole district helped channel money into the public army relief fund.¹⁰⁹ The leaders of Rochester obviously disagreed with the rest of the district, but a settlement was reached, helping to fill the quota.¹¹⁰ Cooperation must have worked as Rochester's district was one of 13 districts in the state that did not have to resort to a draft.¹¹¹

It became obvious to many in July 1864 that the Union Army needed more men to continue the campaigns of Generals U.S. Grant and William T. Sherman. In an editorial entitled "More Men At Once!," the *Rochester Daily Democrat* tried to stir up a patriotic feeling for a forthcoming draft:

A large draft will no doubt take place soon, to throw into the scale and bring the contest to an earlier end. . . . The Rebellion against Law and Liberty must be crushed to death, and one more prompt reinforcement of two or three hundred thousand men will practically finish the job. . . . Let us give one more strong pull all together, and the worst is over.¹¹²

Seven days later, another major call for men was given by President Lincoln on July 18, which was the third national draft.¹¹³ While eliminating the commutation option, he requested 500,000 more men to continue the war, with the district's quota being 2,964, of which Rochester's was 1,168.¹¹⁴ Naturally, bounties and the threat of the draft stimulated volunteering.

As the \$300 county bounty had been revoked by June prior to the federal draft, a bidding war began between the men of Rochester. Substitutes became a highly coveted commodity, though the number of men that were willing to act as substitutes was always decreasing. It was also suggested by some that Rochester should begin transplanting blacks from the border states, such as Kentucky. The *Union* noted:

But the men do not offer freely, and will not at anything like present prices. Our citizens will have to adopt the course of the New England States; that is, send agents to the Border States and pick up negroes for substitutes.¹¹⁵

Some townships did in fact recruit blacks from Kentucky and Tennessee and paid them bounties. For example, fourteen transplanted blacks were credited to Penfield's town quota on July 18, 1864.¹¹⁶

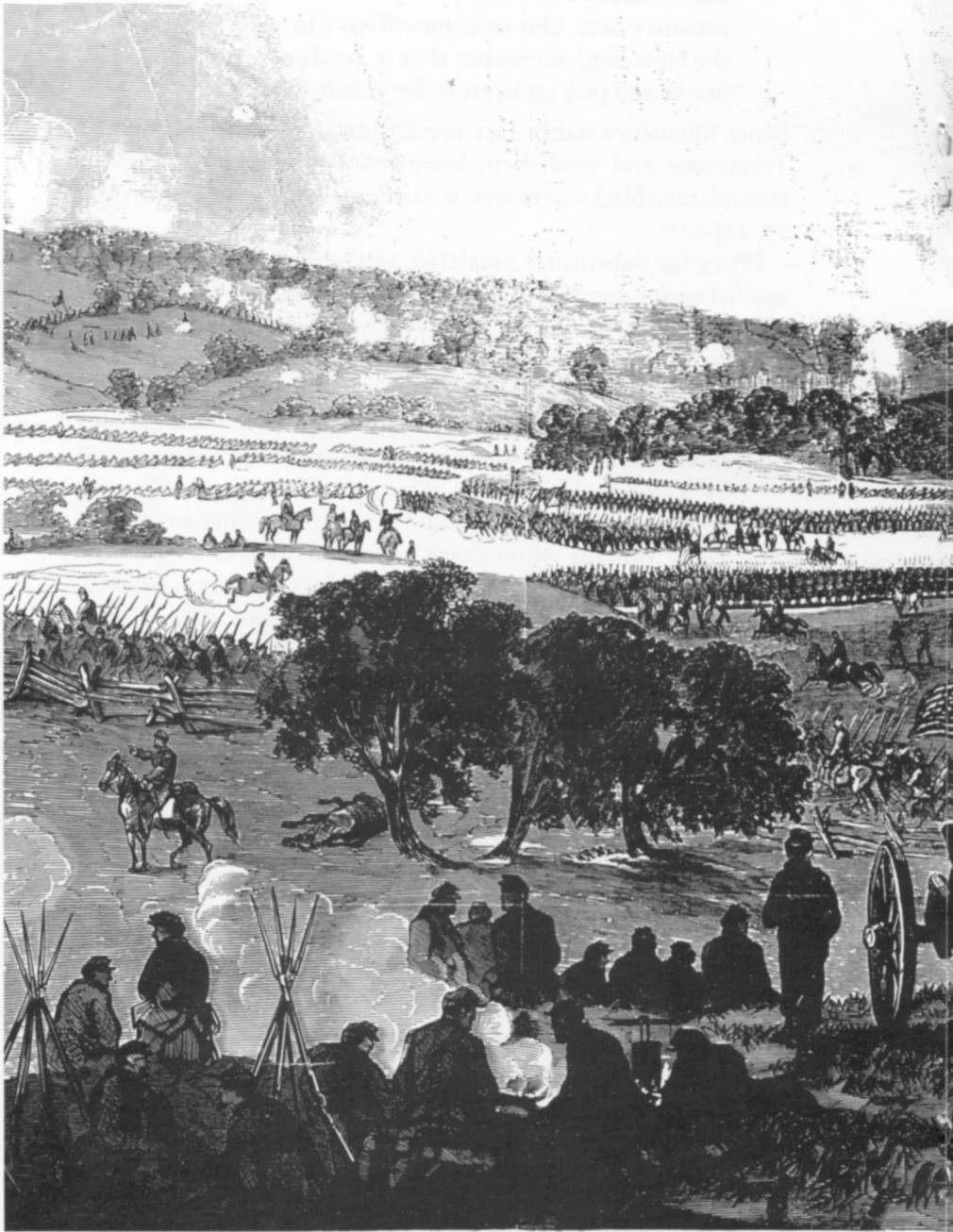
Prices for substitutes escalated, as the men of Rochester bid against each other to get substitutes before a draft took place.¹¹⁷ By the middle of August, the demand for men in Rochester became intense, as the *Union* exaggerated:

It is absolutely unsafe for a young white man to come into Rochester a stranger now, unless he has at least average intelligence, and it is no longer a safe place for a black man if he is among the smartest of his race. The scalper will surely gobble up all the able bodied negroes they find and just as many verdant white chaps as put themselves in the way. They watch the Charlotte cars and the steamers at the dock for Canadians, and if they cannot induce them to sell themselves as soon as they land they will follow them night and day till they find a chance to steal them. ¹¹⁸

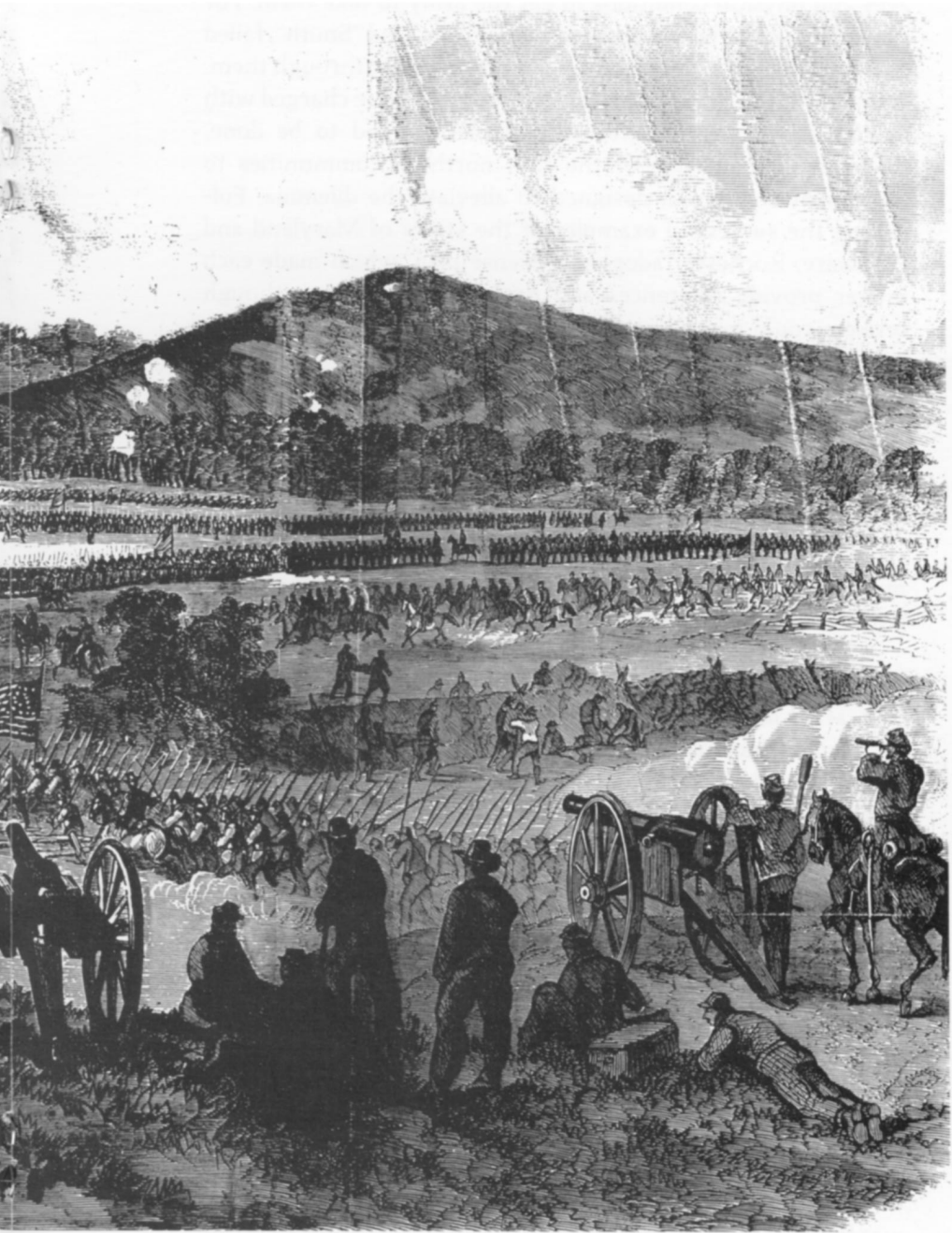
The call for men also became so profound that the price some men were willing to pay ascended to \$500 by August 1 and to \$1,100 by August 11.¹¹⁹ On August 25, a Republican letter writer said he believed the escalating bounties were also due to a growing apathy on the part of Rochester area men. He wrote:

I believe it to be the duty of every man in our midst, without distinction of party--Republicans and Democrats--to strain every nerve to make up the quota of the city from men who are willing voluntarily to join the armies of the Union.¹²⁰

Another problem that the Rochester area addressed in August of 1864 concerned the various practices of bounty and substitute brokers. These brokers, private citizens who acted as liaisons between the army and individual men, found men who wished to enlist, or substitute for another man, and delivered them to the army. In other words, brokers were middle men. More often than not, though, these brokers and their "broker system" were corrupt. The war itself is filled with accounts of brokers getting men drunk or giving them beatings, and then "selling" them to the army. There are also countless incidents of brokers "dressing up" old men, or young boys for that matter, and lying about their



Col. Patrick O'Rorke's death at Little Round Top in the Battle of Gettysburg brought Rochester's citizens together at the Public Library.



together for one of the largest public funerals in its history. *Frank Leslie's Weekly*, July 18, 1863. Rochester

ages and physical conditions to get the army to take them. For example, two Rochester brokers, named "Lee" and "Smith", failed in the attempt of trying to get a man to volunteer through them, and resorted to using violence; later, the two were charged with assault and battery.¹²¹ Realizing something had to be done, Rochester became one of the first northern communities to implement a program designed to alleviate the dilemma. Following the successful examples of the states of Maryland and Delaware, Rochester adopted a license plan, which made each broker provide references and post a bond.¹²² Even though brokers could make hundreds of dollars from one man alone, licenses cost \$7.50.¹²³

While brokers cheated volunteers and substitutes out of money, it was by no means a one-way street. In fact, some brokers were "swindled" by their own recruits, and such incidents took place in Rochester. The *Union* reported on January 16, 1864 of a broker from Cincinnati, Ohio who came to Rochester with five recruits. Local recruiting agent Captain W.H. Groot told the five men that they could have their full bounties if they enlisted without the aid of the broker. In the end,

They repudiated the broker and left him the loser by so much as he had expended. He was of course much chagrined at his ill-luck, and will not be likely to bring any more men from Cincinnati to this market.¹²⁴

The city did realize that it could not compete with other districts that were either offering higher bounties or had lower entrance standards. The Rochester Common Council, in an attempt to keep the 28th district competitive, instituted several bounties for Monroe and Orleans counties. The city bounties were as follows: \$400 for one-year volunteers, \$500 for two-year volunteers, \$600 for three-year volunteers, and \$300 for substitutes.¹²⁵ The county bounties were: \$200 for one-year volunteers, \$300 for three-year volunteers, and \$100 for anyone who recruited another man.¹²⁶ Townships also offered bounties as well, as the Town of Mendon agreed to pay \$500 bounties to volunteers and substitutes who agreed to serve for one year, and \$600 bounties to those agreeing to serve three years or for the duration of the war.¹²⁷ By October 11, the Rochester area's quota was filled. In the end, the city had to pay approximately \$500,000 in bounties for 917 men enlisted at Rochester, and another \$50,000 for 115 men recruited by individual citizens.¹²⁸ On the whole, the 28th congressional district paid almost \$2.5 million in

bounties for the July 18 call for troops, by far the largest amount paid by the district for any of the four drafts, and also the second largest amount paid by any of the state's districts throughout the entire war for all four drafts.¹²⁹ And thus, the third draft was averted in the district; in fact, Rochester was one of the 17 districts in New York State in which no draft was held.¹³⁰

An aforementioned problem that arose at this time throughout the North was the increasing tendency of men to leave their town, county or district, and enlist in another one that offered larger bounties. As this was a widespread predicament, it was a dilemma in Rochester as well. For example, while men from the rest of New York and other states enlisted in Rochester, Rochester-area men enlisted in regiments from every state in the North except Maine, Rhode Island and Missouri.¹³¹ In the first two years of the war, most communities took pride in their ability to call a certain regiment "their own." This was true for regiments raised in Rochester, as one need only look at letters from men of the 13th, 108th and 140th regiments that appeared in the newspapers. But as the war progressed into its fourth year of conflict, the local flavor of many army regiments began to disappear. Again, Rochester was no exception and this trend was felt among the people themselves. Basically, the reason for this lack of pride was that most Union Army units coming from the Rochester area were by no means anywhere near being made up of completely Rochester-area men; the units were composed of men from all around western New York.¹³²

The issue of conscription also had a significant impact on the 28th district's congressional race of 1864. The voting population of Rochester showed its leaders its disapproval of Lincoln's policy concerning conscription, among other reasons, by electing a Democratic mayor in March. As army casualties rose throughout 1864, local criticism of the Republican Party continued. It was in August that the *Union* advocated and supported the nomination of former General George B. McClellan as the Democratic candidate to replace Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States.¹³³ There was a falling out between local Republican Party members, as Radical Republicans nominated the district provost marshal, Roswell Hart, for Congress, while conservative Republicans chose James L. Angle. The local Democratic Party also nominated Angle, in a strategic attempt to split the Republican vote.¹³⁴ The campaign itself contained several serious accusations, including one by the Democrats charging that the Republicans in national

office were postponing another draft until after the congressional and presidential races were over.¹³⁵ Hart eventually won the election and the seat in the House of Representatives, but there were charges that the election itself contained fraudulently recorded soldier's votes.¹³⁶ With Hart's victory, he resigned from his provost marshal position on January 17, 1865, and was succeeded by Isaac F. Quinby.¹³⁷

Throughout this 1864 congressional election campaign, Hart used his power as the local provost marshal to gain support. Special Agent William W. Riley, who investigated the practices of numerous enrollment boards in New York State, discovered that Hart granted furloughs to recruits out of fear of losing their votes on election day. There was of course a complication to Hart's illegal practice, which was that many of the men who were given furloughs did not bother to report back for duty after their furlough was over.¹³⁸ In one reported incident, 22 Canadians enlisted in the 28th district, received a portion of their bounties, and went back to Canada on a furlough granted by Hart.¹³⁹ In Riley's report on Hart and other district provost marshals, he came to the conclusion that provost marshals "are seeking political popularity more than the interests of the Government and those men not running for Congress this year expect to at some future day."¹⁴⁰

Even after the election's conclusion, Democrats continued to blame the need to draft on the Republicans. The Democratically-controlled *Union* said the four calls of 1864 (500,000 men on February 1; 200,000 men on March 15; 500,000 on July 19; and 300,000 on December 19) were unnecessary.¹⁴¹ The *Union* said it failed to understand why the Union Army still could not win the war, even with the call for 1.2 million new men from February through July, by writing:

Why, then, this new draft upon the blood of the country, if our "rulers" have administered the Department of War faithfully and honestly, and if they were correct in their ante-election pledges and prophesies? Why, out of calls for twelve hundred thousand men between February and July, has not a sufficient force been realized to meet the requirements of the service?¹⁴²

As it was understood that another national draft, the fourth and final draft of the war, was needed in late 1864 to fill manpower necessities, Rochester was in fact showing signs of fatigue in the fall. An "editorial truce" that had existed in

Rochester for a short period of time between the three newspapers gave way to debates over several issues, including conscription. If anything, it was widely known that if the war was to be won, then every community, Rochester included, and the press had to answer the Union Army's additional troop requests with enthusiasm.¹⁴³

It became obvious to everyone, except some Democrats, that more troops were needed to give the Confederacy the final blow that would topple it as 1864 came to a close. The spring elections of 1865 saw the Republican Party retake control of the local Rochester city government and began issuing bounties of \$600 to anyone volunteering before the 1865 draft,¹⁴⁴ and \$250 to those who agreed to be inducted into the army as a result of being conscripted or providing a substitute. The *Union* did not support the draft at this time, as it claimed that the district's previous volunteers, draftees, and substitutes had surpassed any past quota figures. It also said the Republican-run federal government and the Union Army's strategy were both wasteful of the North's manpower resources.¹⁴⁵ By March, the average price for substitutes for the Union Army's final national draft in the Rochester area went as high as \$1,500 in an effort to satisfy the quota of 651 men that spring.¹⁴⁶ Non-federal bounties were unable to raise enough volunteers to satisfy the troop assignment and the city had to resort to drafting.

An attempt was also made to suspend the draft in Rochester, when a petition was sent to Washington in March asking that the men of Rochester be allowed to focus on repairing the damage that the Great Flood of 1865 had caused.¹⁴⁷ The flood itself destroyed the Erie and New York Central railroad bridges, and brought the city's activities to a chaotic halt.¹⁴⁸ The request to suspend the draft was turned down by Provost Marshal Fry, as the *Union* wrote:

And so ended the interview with the redoubtable Fry. . . . Every man who has anything to do with that department of public affairs under the charge of Fry must hope for the speedy termination of the war that his occupation may be gone.¹⁴⁹

The actual draft raised 97 men, 86 of which were substitutes, while 61.7 percent of those men drafted were discharged without examination.¹⁵⁰ (see Appendix II) None of the draftees actually served in the army, as they too were all given discharges in April, due to the war's finish.¹⁵¹ Men who furnished substitutes were also reimbursed.¹⁵²

The war came to its conclusion for the city of Rochester on April 9, 1865, when news arrived of Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House. "... The joyous clangor of the big fire bell in the Court House and of every other bell in the city brought citizens flocking into the downtown streets."¹⁵³ People celebrated until two o'clock in the morning when they were scattered by a cold rain.¹⁵⁴ Everyone celebrated the victory, with the exception of one group--the men who made a living by recruiting men to fight in the army. As the *Union* noted, "To-day everybody smiles but the scalpers."¹⁵⁵ With the suspension of the spring draft, the community that had sent forth roughly 5,000 men looked ahead to the return of Rochester-area men who were still in front-line units.¹⁵⁶

It was not until after Lincoln's funeral train had left Rochester on April 27, that local Rochester regiments returned for heroes' welcomes. Even though the city gladly welcomed home its men, it could not help but think of the Rochester men who were killed in the war. "The sense of relief and joy which swept over the North could at least assuage the grief of those whose menfolk would never return. Rochester shared this sacrifice to the extent of 650 men, an honor roll which included representatives from all elements of the community."¹⁵⁷

Conclusions

One post-war result of conscription, which had an indirect impact on the community of Rochester, was the close sense of camaraderie shared by many of the community's veterans. This fraternal fellowship began during the opening weeks of the war, was developed with daily army life and numerous events such as the death and burial of Colonel O'Rorke, and was consummated with final victory in 1865. As the Union Army took men from all walks of life and all sections of the community, whether it was through enlistments, the draft, or substitution, it had the result of creating a sense of brotherhood for both men in the city and surrounding areas. Above all else, the one institution that bound the former Civil War soldiers of Rochester together was the Grand Army of the Republic, a national veteran's organization that continued into the 20th century. In fact, New York State's first chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic was in Rochester: O'Rorke Post No. 1.¹⁵⁸ This post was also the second in the entire Union, after Decatur, Illinois, in 1866.¹⁵⁹

This new-found friendship between men from different areas, plus the actual victory in the war, had a significant impact on local politics, as there was a sense of union. As was the case throughout the North, the Republican Party dominated the political landscape, and Rochester was no exception. The Republican Party commanded the local, state and national elections in Rochester for the several decades following the war. For example, one need only look at the mayoral elections of the city of Rochester. Republicans held the mayoralty for 25 of the 30 years after the war, including the period from 1871-1890.¹⁶⁰

One question that inevitably arises when discussing Civil War conscription concerns whether or not the war was actually “a rich man’s war, but a poor man’s fight.” This inquiry, which has been dealt with by historians on the national and state levels, can be addressed when discussing the area of Rochester as well. In this socio-economic issue, one can compare Rochester’s provost marshal district to other districts by examining the amount of non-federal bounty payments made. Throughout the war, New York State’s 31 districts paid out about \$86.6 million in non-federal bounties, with the 28th district spending approximately \$3.9 million, roughly 40.4 percent higher than the district average.¹⁶¹ Also, while an average of \$22.32 per citizen was raised and then paid out in the state, the 28th district raised \$30.34, seventh highest of the 31 districts.¹⁶² This, of course, paints the picture that Rochester was one of the state’s wealthier districts. Rochester was also one of nine districts in which two of the four federal drafts were avoided, and there were four others that evaded three drafts.¹⁶³ Rochester avoided the second and third federal drafts primarily because of bounty payments to volunteers and substitutes.

An examination of the contributions of draftees, substitutes and commutation payments supports the “rich man’s war, but a poor man’s fight” argument. Better known to the federal government as the 28th provost-marshal district, the Rochester area had a per capita valuation of \$304 during the war years.¹⁶⁴ Of New York State’s 31 districts, the 28th district ranked eighth in value. Of all the men of Rochester who were held to service and were examined by the various enrolling boards, 48.5 percent exercised the commutation clause, 43.5 percent provided substitutes, and eight percent went into the army as draftees.¹⁶⁵ Overall, a large amount of Rochester’s men elected to use money to avoid serving in the army.

Comparing Rochester to the other upstate New York provost-

marshal districts provides no clear-cut conclusions.¹⁰⁰ Rochester was supposedly a wealthier district than both Utica and Syracuse, yet the latter districts commuted more often than Rochester. Also, a smaller percentage of Utica's and Syracuse's men had to serve as draftees, which is inconsistent with the "rich man's war, but a poor man's fight" argument, since one would assume that a "richer" district, such as Rochester, would have had the smaller proportion of men entering the army as draftees. On the other hand, Binghamton's 26th district was poorer than Rochester's 28th district, yet had over twice as large a percentage of its men yielding to the draft. This corrolates with the traditional sentiment that poor districts had to provide a larger percentage of draftees than rich ones, while its relative level of "poverty" would reflect an assumed low level of commutation and substitution. Finally, while Buffalo's 30th district was somewhat wealthier than Rochester, its combined totals for commutation and substitution were roughly the same as those for Rochester.

During the American Civil War, the Rochester area represented a microcosm of the war's home-front communities throughout the North. Most, if not all, of the elements of Civil War conscription were present in Rochester: the general opposition to a federal draft; the issues of substitution, commutation, and bounties; the targeting of ethnics by recruiters; the desire by most to use blacks as substitutes; and the patriotic sentiment that the district's people were contributing more than their "fair share." While Rochester was exempt from the second and third national drafts, and did not endure the draft riots that shook other northern cities, it did brave the everyday trials and tribulations of the war, most notably the issuance of the much-feared troop quotas and the eventual loss of life. Despite the differences in Rochester's socio-economic classes, political factions, and ethnic groups, one factor that remained constant with Rochester's people was the united effort to protect their community from the devastation of war. At the same time, however, Rochester attempted to contribute what it could to the North's cause. Money was, of course, a major issue with the citizens of Rochester, whether it entailed controversies over commutation or substitution, or the payment of bounties by the federal, state or local governments. Even though Rochester was an important community in the pre-war abolitionist movement, in the end, it took money and the threat of being drafted to get Rochester men into Union Army uniforms to preserve the Union, as was the case throughout much of the North.

APPENDIX I

Result of the 1863 Draft: The First National Conscription in Rochester, New York

Number Drawn	3,265
Not Examined	327
Failed to Report	327
Examined	2,938
Held to Service	810
Personally Held	61
Furnished Substitutes	309
Paid Commutation	440
Exempted	2,128
Physical Disability	990
Only Son of Widow	97
Only Son of Aged Parents	153
Elected Under Fourth Clause	23
Only Brother of Children Under 12	1
Father of Motherless Children	
Under 12	36
Two Brothers in Service	32
Convicted of Felony	2
In Service, March 3, 1863	99
Aliens	408
Over 45 Years of Age	7
Over 35 Years of Age and Married	145
Under 20 Years of Age	49
Non-Residence	86

Source: **Fry's Report**, Part I, 167, 172.

APPENDIX II

Result of the December 19, 1864 Draft:
The Final Draft of the War
in Rochester, New York

Number Drawn	1,534
Not Examined	1,198
Failed to Report	251
Discharged, Quota Filled	240
Discharged, Per Order	707
Examined	336
Held to Service	97
Personally Held	11
Furnished Substitutes	86
Exempted	239
Physical Disability	160
In Service When Drafted	1
Aliens	17
Over 45 Years of Age	35
Non-Residence	18
Furnished Substitutes Before Draft	8

Source: **Fry's Report**, Part I, 201, 206.

End Notes

63. **Union**, July 13, 1863, pg. 2. **Rochester Daily Democrat and American**, July 13, 1863, pg. 1.
64. **Democrat**, July 23, 1863, pg. 1.
65. *Ibid.*, May 2, 1863, 1. *Ibid.*, May 4, 1863, pg. 1.
66. McKelvey, "Rochester's Part in the Civil War," pg. 16.
67. McKelvey, **Rochester: The Flower City**, pg. 90.
68. **Union**, July 16, 1863, pg. 2.
69. Blake McKelvey, "Rochester's Ethnic Transformations," **Rochester History**, Vol. XXV, No. 3 (July, 1963), pg. 5.
70. McKelvey, **Rochester: The Flower City**, pg. 92.
71. McKelvey, "Rochester's Part in the Civil War," pg. 18.
72. Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck, "A Growing Agitation: Rochester Before, During and After The Civil War," **Rochester History**, Vol. XLVI, Nos. 1-2 (Jan. and April, 1984), pg. 28.
73. Marsh, pg. 37.
74. Iver Bernstein, **The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War**, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pg. 5.
75. **The Eighth Census, 1860**, pg. 336.
76. **Democrat**, August 5, 1863, pg. 2.
77. **Union**, July 18, 1863, pg. 2.
78. Marsh, pg. 44.
79. **Official Records**, Series I, Vol. 27 part 2, pp. 931-939.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 934-935.
81. **Union**, July 14, 1863, pg. 2.
82. **Democrat**, July 23, 1863, pg. 1.
83. **Union**, July 14, 1863, pg. 2.
84. *Ibid.*
85. Marsh, pg. 44.
86. **Union**, July 21, 1863, pg. 2.
87. *Ibid.*, July 22, 1863, pg. 3.
88. *Ibid.*
89. Marsh, pp. 44-45.
90. **Fry's Report**, pg. 217.

91. **Democrat**, August 6, 1863, pg. 1.
92. Marsh, pg. 45.
93. Williams was left in charge of the family newspaper in 1862 at the age of 12 when her brother Leroy joined the army. In 1864, the newspaper's circulation was over 2,000 and, in 1865, it was one of only two weeklies in Monroe County, excluding the city of Rochester.
94. Katherine Wilcox Thompson, **Penfield's Past 1810-1960**, (Rochester: Christopher Press, 1960), pg. 171.
95. Marsh, pg. 45.
96. **Union**, August 17, 1863, pg. 3.
97. **Democrat**, August 8, 1863, pg. 1. **Union**, August 8, 1863, pg. 2.
98. **Union**, August 15, 1863, pg. 2.
99. Ibid.
100. Marsh, pg. 46.
101. Ibid., **Fry's Report**, Part I, pp. 167, 172.
102. **Union**, September 15, 1863, pg. 2.
103. Ibid., September 17, 1863, pg. 3.
104. Ibid.
105. Ibid., September 24, 1863, pg. 2.
106. Ibid.
107. Marsh, pg. 36.
108. Thompson, pp. 174-175.
109. Marsh, pg. 56.
110. Ibid., pg. 57.
111. **Fry's Report**, pg. 177.
112. **Rochester Daily Democrat**, July 11, 1864, pg. 2.
113. Ibid., July 19, 1864, pg. 1.
114. Marsh, pg. 57.
115. **Union**, July 9, 1864, pg. 2.
116. Thompson, pg. 211.
117. Marsh, pg. 57.
118. **Union**, August 12, 1864, pg. 2.
119. Ibid., August 1, 1864, pg. 2. Ibid., August 11, 1864, pg. 2.
120. Ibid., August 25, 1864, pg. 2.

121. Eugene Converse Murdock, **One Million Men: The Civil War Draft in the North**, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1971), pg. 284.
122. Ibid., pg. 304.
123. Eugene Converse Murdock, **Patriotism Limited 1862-1865: The Civil War Draft and the Bounty System**, (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1967), pg. 130.
124. **Union**, January 16, 1864, pg. 2.
125. Marsh, pp. 57-58.
126. Ibid.
127. Helen D. Cooney and Marian C. Powell, **History of the Village of Honeoye Falls and Town of Mendon**, (Ovid, New York: W.E. Morrison & Co., 1976), pp. 19-20.
128. Marsh, pg. 58.
129. The district also paid \$525,000 for the March 14, 1864 draft, and about \$690,000 for the December 19, 1864 draft. **Fry's Report**, I, pg. 217.
130. Ibid., I, pg. 187.
131. **Census of the State of New York, For 1865**, (Albany: Charles Van Benthuysen & Sons, 1857), pg. 622.
132. Ibid.
133. McKelvey, "Rochester's Part in the Civil War," pg. 19.
134. Ibid., pg. 20.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
137. Murdock, **One Million Men**, pg. 102.
138. Murdock, **Patriotism Limited 1862-1865**, pg. 169.
139. Ibid.
140. Ibid.
141. **Union**, December 21, 1864, pg. 3.
142. Ibid.
143. McKelvey, "Rochester's Part in the Civil War," pg. 21.
144. This draft was issued on December 19, 1864.
145. McKelvey, **Rochester: The Flower City**, pg. 95.
146. Ibid.
147. **Union**, March 21, 1865, pg. 2.

148. Howard C. Hosmer, **Monroe County (1821-1971): The Sesqui-Centennial Account of the History of Monroe County of New York**, (Rochester: The Flower City Printing, 1971), pg. 25.
149. **Union**, April 3, 1865, pg. 2.
150. **Fry's Report**, Part I, pp. 201, 206.
151. Marsh, pg. 70.
152. **Union**, May 1, 1865, pg. 2.
153. McKelvey, "Rochester's Part in the Civil War," pp. 22-23.
154. *Ibid.*, pg. 23.
155. Marsh, pg. 71.
156. McKelvey, **Rochester: The Flower City**, pg. 96.
157. *Ibid.*, pg. 97.
158. Hosmer, pp. 25, 27. **Monroe Co. Patriots: Roster of Posts, Camps and Auxiliaries**, (Rochester: W.G. Spinning, Book and Job Printer, 1896), pg. 17.
159. *Ibid.*
160. Blake McKelvey, "Rochester Mayors Before the Civil War," **Rochester History**, Vol. XXVI, No. 2 (Jan., 1964), pp. 1-20. Blake McKelvey, "The Mayors of Rochester's Mid Years: 1860-1900," **Rochester History**, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1 (Jan., 1966), pp. 1-24.
161. **Fry's Report**, Part I, pp. 214-217. **The Eighth Census, 1860**, pg. 328.
162. *Ibid.*
163. **Fry's Report**, pp. 165-210.
164. Eugene Converse Murdock, "Was It 'A Poor Man's Fight'?" **Civil War History**, (Vol. X, No. 3, 1964), pp. 242-243.
165. *Ibid.*, pg. 243. **Fry's Report**, pp. 167, 172, 200, 206.
166. Information for this analysis taken from Murdock "Was It 'A Poor Man's Fight'?", pp. 242-243.

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Copy edited by Hans Munsch.

Back Cover: Draft notice sent to Elisha Carpenter August 12, 1863 by Roswell Hart, Provost Marshal.

Form 39.

Provost Marshal's Office,

28th District, State of New York

August 12, 1863,

Oliver M. Carpenter
House of Refuge Rochester

SIR:

You are hereby notified that you were, on the 5th day of August, 1863, legally drafted in the service of the United States for the period of 3 Years, in accordance with the provisions of the act of Congress, "for enrolling and calling out the national forces, and for other purposes," approved March 3, 1863. You will accordingly report, on or before the 20th August, at the place of rendezvous, in Rochester, or be deemed a deserter, and be subject to the penalty prescribed therefor by the Rules and Articles of War.

Transportation will be furnished you on presenting this notification at _____, on the _____, or at the station nearest you: place of residence.

Roswell Wash

Provost Marshal,

28th Dist. of New York