

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY IN CIVIL WAR DESERTION

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COMMUNITIES, LIKE INDIVIDUALS, have personalities, and their response to crises reflect their peculiar characteristics. During the Civil War, Northern communities played an important role in supplying the Union armies with soldiers. Townships met their obligations in various ways, from sponsoring rallies that aroused the patriotic fervor of their own young men to hiring substitutes from as far away as Europe.

The American Civil War was a transitional war in many ways, including the manner in which armies were recruited. From its earliest days, military service was handled locally, and initially Abraham Lincoln followed tradition by calling upon the states' militia. At the war's outset the federal government was feeble, secession having left it tottering, while the state governments were stable, financially sound, and already in possession of military organizations.¹ When the president issued a call for men, the secretary of war notified the governors of their quotas, which were then apportioned throughout the states. On 4 August 1862, however, Lincoln issued a call for the draft of 300,000 men, the first instance of the federal government assuming military draft prerogatives in the United States. The protests made by the governors did not question the president's authority to order a draft, which at least one source contends was of "dubious legality,"² but rather the quotas and time allowed for the recruitment. This executive draft of 1862 was relatively ineffective; its "chief contribution . . . was that it affirmed without serious constitutional opposition the principle of a compulsive Federal draft of manpower for military purposes."³ On 3 March 1863 Congress passed the Draft Act, firmly establishing the principle "that every citizen owes the Nation the obligation to defend it and that the Federal Government can impose that obligation directly on the citizen without mediation of the states."⁴

Only about 6 percent of the Union soldiers were obtained directly

¹ Fred Albert Shannon, *The Organization and Administration of the Union Army 1861-1865* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965), 1:22.

² Marvin A. Kreidberg and Merton G. Henry, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army 1775-1945* (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of the Army, 1955), p. 104.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

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through the draft, yet it probably increased the number of volunteers because the draftee was peculiarly stigmatized. Fred A. Shannon believes that the "coercive power of the draft was more moral than statutory and seems to have exerted its direct influence more upon the state and local governments and patriotic organizations than upon the people direct."⁵ State and local officials, independent clubs, and recruiting officers "alternated between describing the ignominies and horrors of drafting and advertising the bounties they were willing to offer volunteers."⁶

Neither drafting nor bribery was necessary at the war's outset. Enthusiasm was high. Men marched off to fight in a blaze of excitement, and many were apprehensive that peace would be proclaimed before they had the opportunity to fire a weapon at the enemy. So many men volunteered that individuals and organized units alike were turned away by the state and federal governments.

Besides the patriotic fervor and holiday spirit, the regional economies aided in the procurement of volunteers. Jobs were scarce and many young men were unemployed. Volunteers, believing the war would be over quickly, considered soldiering as a short-term occupation—something to tide them over for the next few months. In December 1861 Edwin F. Worthington wrote to his mother, "I could find nothing to do anywhere so . . . I went to New York and enlisted."⁷ Another young man, Phinias E. Johnson, informed his cousin that he had no work and no immediate prospects for employment.⁸ Within a few months, Johnson's uncle explained, "He enlisted . . . in a fit of dejection and discouragement at not being successful in getting steady work or a proper remuneration."⁹ Both of these young men died before a year passed.

As the war continued volunteers became scarce. The surplus labor supply had been absorbed by the army and by the increased demands of farms and factories. Potential volunteers, weighing their earning capacity in civil life with the meager pay of a soldier, chose to remain civilians.¹⁰

The federal government recognized that more incentive was needed to draw voluntary enlistments and instituted the bounty system. Severely criticized at the time, as well as down through the years since the war, the bounty system led to and encouraged desertion. As it became increasingly difficult to obtain recruits, states and localities

⁵ Shannon, *Organization and Administration*, 1:291.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:57.

⁷ Edwin F. Worthington to his mother, 25 December 1861, Pennypacker Long Island Collection, Easthampton Free Library, New York.

⁸ Phinias E. Johnson to his cousin, 21 April 1861, Whittaker Historical Collection, Southold Public Library, New York.

⁹ Joshua Payne to his brother, 18 December 1862, Whittaker Historical Collection, Southold Public Library, New York.

¹⁰ Shannon, *Organization and Administration*, 1:259.

offered ever higher bounties to attract prospective soldiers to their own area, thus receiving credit toward their draft quotas. The expenditures for bounties, approximately \$750,000,000, were "about as much as the pay for the entire Army during the entire war; exceeded quartermaster expenditures for the war; and were twice as great as the cost of subsistence and five times the ordnance costs."¹¹

The basic evil of the system was that as communities vied with each other for recruits, the bounty, rather than being an incentive to enlist, became a "price for mercenaries. . . . However well the bounty program was conceived, in practice it was costly, inefficient, and sordid."¹² This situation encouraged bounty-jumping, wherein a man volunteered, collected his bounty, deserted, and reenlisted in another area using an alias. Ella Lonn concludes, "The vast size of the country, the feverish zeal of each town and city district to fill its quota, rendered it hard to detect the miserable bounty-jumpers."¹³

The high rate of desertion was closely related to the bounty system, and those states paying the largest bounties produced the largest proportion of deserters.¹⁴ New York, which paid the highest bounties in the country (one district averaging \$407.74 per volunteer),¹⁵ had a high percentage of deserters: 89.06 per thousand, as compared with a national rate of 62.51 per thousand.¹⁶

Substitution, which allowed a draftee to furnish a man in his place, was another inducement to desert. The price for substitutes increased as draftees vied with one another to hire replacements. The competition for substitutes also raised bounties because men enlisting for mercenary reasons would naturally seek out the highest profit available. High bounties, in turn, encouraged desertion, as men moved on to avail themselves of those high profits as often as possible. Many people, of course, could not afford the price of a substitute, and charges were made that it was a rich man's war and a poor man's fight.

An additional factor in the desertion rate was the high proportion of recent immigrants in the Union armies. Many foreign-born men had settled in the United States long before the war began. Others, however, came for the express purpose of enlisting, and still others were cajoled and tricked into coming by less-than-honest agents sent abroad on recruiting missions. These agents, hired by local and state governments, promised industrial and agricultural employment in America. Upon arrival in the States, however, the immigrants were delivered to a re-

¹¹ Kreidberg and Henry, *History of Military Mobilization*, pp. 109-10.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 110.

¹³ Ella Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1966), p. 141.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁵ Shannon, *Organization and Administration*, 2:61.

¹⁶ Lonn, *Desertion*, p. 138.

cruiting officer, but the agent collected the major portion of the bounty due the recruits. Having no money, and no options, the men became unwilling soldiers. Understandably, such foreign-born soldiers were the most likely to desert. Statistics compiled by Provost Marshall General J. B. Fry revealed a far greater ratio of deserters for the eastern states, with urban populations in which the foreign elements were significant, than for the western states, where a larger native-born population prevailed. He held that desertion was a crime of foreigners rather than of native Americans, and army officers corroborated this view.¹⁷

Deserters often escaped punishment. Through the course of the war there were approximately 200,000 desertions, but only about 80,000 arrests. Of those tried, 147 were executed by firing squads.¹⁸ Although military officials objected strenuously, Lincoln commuted death sentences on the slightest pretext. Lonn believes that public opinion made execution for desertion difficult until 1864, when the nation finally recognized the "inevitability of war rigor in time of war,"¹⁹ but by then there were just too many deserters. Few were shot, "and the evil increased."²⁰ A civilian recalled Lincoln explaining his leniency in desertion cases: "If I should go shooting men by scores for desertion, I should have such a hullabaloo about my ears as I have not heard yet, and I should deserve it. You cannot order men shot by dozens or twenties. People won't stand it and they ought not to stand it."²¹

Although some general conclusions have been drawn about the motives of Civil War deserters, too little is known about the degree of influence the community had on its enlistees while they were away from home. Comparisons of two townships located in Suffolk County, Long Island, New York, and of some of their enlistees suggest a significant relationship between the community's sense of responsibility and the enlistees' devotion to military service. Brookhaven and Southold, although close geographically, responded quite differently to the demands of war, as did the men enlisting in each of these townships.

The 190 individuals studied from these two townships (70 from Brookhaven, 120 from Southold) enlisted between August and November of 1862. By that time the feverpitch of volunteering had worn off. People recognized that the war was not going to be over quickly, and the realities of war began hitting home as deaths from battle and disease were reported. When Lincoln issued his draft call in August 1862, these

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁸ E. B. Long and Barbara Long, *The Civil War Day by Day: An Almanac, 1861-1865* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1971), p. 714.

¹⁹ Lonn, *Desertion*, p. 223.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 222.

²¹ Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1939), 1:554.

communities were eager to avoid the degradation of drafting their quotas, so they turned to other methods to fulfill their obligations.

In general, the men enlisting from Brookhaven and Southold were similar. The majority of them were between 18 and 29 years of age. Both townships followed the national trend of heavy enlistments of 18 and 21 year olds, with a curious lag in the enlistment of 19 and 20 year olds. Brookhaven enlisted 16 men who were 18 or 21 as opposed to 7 who were 19 or 20; Southold had 31 in the former group and 14 in the latter. The average age of enlistees from both townships was 23.47, somewhat lower than the national average of 25.81.²² When broken down according to township, however, Brookhaven's average was 25.88, while Southold's was only 22.83.

Occupations were varied among the enlistees but were similar between communities. Thirty-five percent of the enlistees were farmers or farm laborers, well below the 48 percent national average. Given the unique characteristics of the Long Island area, however, an additional 12 percent were listed as mariners, boatmen, baymen, or fishermen—occupations not listed in the national categories other than under "4 percent miscellaneous."²³ Among the Brookhaven and Southold enlistees were also seven carpenters, three shoemakers, two printers, two blacksmiths, one wheelwright, one cooper, and one pedlar. No professional men or merchants enlisted in these townships during the period studied.²⁴

The number of foreign-born enlisted from each township in late 1862 accounts for the greatest difference between the two groups of men. Only 6 percent of Southold's enlistees were of foreign birth, while Brookhaven's enlistees included 40 percent foreign-born.

Although the enlistees were similar in age and occupation, the two townships were strikingly different. A decade after the Civil War a local historian described Brookhaven, the largest township in Suffolk County, as "still covered with forest and scrub growth. The settlements are mostly along the middle, and on the south side. Between these ranges of settlements large tracts of wood-land intervene, the monotony of which

²² Long and Long, *The Civil War*, p. 707.

²³ Ibid., p. 707.

²⁴ Information on the individual men was obtained from a variety of sources. The names and other data on the Brookhaven volunteers were taken from a set of enlistment papers preserved at the Suffolk County Historical Society, Riverhead, New York. The Southold names came from William S. Pelletreau's *A History of Long Island*, Vol. 2 (New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1903). The service record of each man was found in the *Annual Reports of the Adjutant General of the State of New York for the Years 1893-1905*, forty-three volumes additionally entitled *Registers of New York Regiments in the War of the Rebellion* (Albany, New York). The 1860 Federal Census, Schedule 1, Population (microfilm, State University of New York at Stony Brook), and the 1865 New York State Census (manuscript, Pennypacker Long Island Collection, Easthampton Free Library, New York), were used to determine the geographic mobility of the individuals.

is scarcely broken by any attempt at improvement."²⁵ Brookhaven does not appear to have had the makings of a cohesive social unit: widely scattered settlements, with difficult access to other areas, prevented the closeness apparent in other Long Island townships of the period. There were also no newspapers published in Brookhaven during the Civil War that might have promoted community spirit and unity.

The published records of Brookhaven make no mention of the war until February 1864, but the journal of Nathaniel Miller, town supervisor,²⁶ contains an entry on 21 August 1862 noting that a town meeting voted authority to the supervisor to raise money to pay each volunteer a \$150 bounty. In June 1864 the bounty was raised to \$300. On 12 January 1865 a special town meeting authorized a committee to get substitutes at a price of up to \$500 for a three-year enlistment. From late 1862 to the end of the war, the supervisor was active in finding substitutes for the men drafted from Brookhaven. He often traveled to Jamaica, Long Island, or to New York City for that purpose.²⁷ Miller's success in 1862 is revealed by the enlistment papers for the months of August through November; of the 240 men enlisted, 109 were foreign-born, 74 of whom were born in Ireland. Only 2 of these foreigners appeared in either the 1860 federal or the 1865 New York State census, suggesting that the overwhelming majority of recruits were probably not Brookhaven residents at the time of enlistment. Though foreigners were not the only deserters, this may have contributed to the extremely high desertion rate found among this particular group of men. While the national figures show an approximate rate of 10 percent,²⁸ the desertion rate for the Brookhaven enlistees examined here was 27 percent.

Although 240 enlistment papers are extant from Brookhaven, the following analysis is based upon the military careers of 70 individuals—42 native-born and 28 foreign-born. These were the only individuals for whom complete service records could be found.

Brookhaven's foreign enlistees were all mustered in during November 1862 and may well have been the group mentioned by the town supervisor in his journal: "Nov. 5th, 1862 In New York and arranged for aliens in Cochoran Brigand [*sic*] for men enough . . . to fill the quota of the town for \$80 each a saving to the town of \$220 to what I had paid previous as the other towns and counties had got their supply of men we could make better terms."²⁹ All but 8 of the 28 Brookhaven enlistees for whom records were found were Irish.

²⁵ Richard M. Bayles, *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Suffolk County with a Historical Outline of Long Island* (Port Washington, New York: Ira J. Friedman, 1962), p. 224.

²⁶ Long Island follows the New England tradition of referring to townships as towns.

²⁷ Memo from the Journal of Nathaniel Miller, 5 November 1862, Brookhaven Town Historian's Office, Port Jefferson, New York.

²⁸ Shannon, *Organization and Administration*, 1:179.

²⁹ Miller Journal, 5 November 1862.

It has been estimated that 15 percent of the soldiers from New York were born in Ireland.³⁰ Their motives for enlisting were varied: some thought it would be good training for the time when Ireland would strike a blow for freedom from England; others believed that in accepting America's privileges they must also accept the duties; and many enlisted from mercenary motives.³¹ Once they were in the army, the Irish proved to be hard fighters, men who could be relied upon to carry their share, and more, in battle. Many of them fought as a unit in the Irish Brigade and Cocoran's Brigade, which included the 155th New York State Volunteers, the regiment that these Brookhaven foreign-born served in. The Irish carried into battle their distinctive green flags. Their battle losses were always high: they suffered heavy casualties at Gettysburg, Antietam, Wilderness, Cold Harbor, North Anna, and Petersburg. They were virtually massacred at Fredericksburg during the assault on Marye's Heights. Southern generals, however, praised the courage of these Irish soldiers. George Pickett, for example, wrote, "The brilliant assault . . . was beyond description. . . . cheer after cheer at their fearlessness went up all along our lines." Robert E. Lee said that "never were men so brave." A. P. Hill, perhaps, said it best when he exclaimed: "There are those d— green flags again!"³² And the historian Ella Lonn pays them tribute when she writes, "Undeniably the Irish added a picturesque and dramatic quality beyond that of other races to the motley array of the Union Army."³³

Although the Irish had a reputation for bravery, 35 percent of the 20 who enlisted from Brookhaven in late 1862 deserted. The overall desertion rate among Brookhaven's foreign enlistees was 39 percent, or 11 of the 28 studied. Seven individuals deserted within the first month, 3 men deserted after serving approximately eight months, and one served for thirteen months.

As the 155th New York State Volunteers, in which all but 2 of Brookhaven's foreigners served, had been engaged in only minor skirmishes during the time these deserters served, battle fatigue was not the motive for deserting. These enlistees were men with no apparent ties to the people of Brookhaven. Nor did their regiment supplant their alienation: it was predominantly European, but non-Irish, and the few Brookhaven foreigners who enlisted together were scattered among many companies. Thus it appears that there was no community spirit binding these individuals to their military obligations.

Native-born volunteers from Brookhaven also had a high rate of desertion: 8 (19 percent) of the 42 studied deserted. These 42 men

³⁰ Joseph M. Hennon, Jr., *Celts, Catholics, and Copperheads: Ireland Views the American Civil War* (Ohio State University Press, 1968), p. 17.

³¹ Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1951), pp. 74-75.

³² Hennon, *Celts, Catholics, and Copperheads*, p. 18.

³³ Lonn, *Foreigners*, p. 648.

became members of nine different organizations, with the largest group, made up of 22 men, joining the Second New York Cavalry. Five Brookhaven men deserted from this unit after serving less than a month. Although the Second Cavalry was active throughout the war, no action occurred while these men served. Four men deserted on 26 October 1862, all with the last name of Albin. The fifth man left the following day. All of these men were listed in the 1860 federal census, but only Thomas B. Albin appeared in the 1865 state census where, under "Remarks" regarding his war service, is the comment, "Skedaddled after two months." One man from Brookhaven, who enlisted in the 145th New York State Volunteers, deserted after five months. The regiment had been involved in virtually no fighting during his term. There was one volunteer in the Eleventh New York Volunteer Cavalry, also known as Scott's 900. He deserted within five months, after having been involved in very little fighting. The final native-born deserter was one of two men who enlisted in the First Mounted Rifles, New York State Volunteers. He had served fifteen months, during which time his regiment was not involved in heavy fighting, although it took part in many minor affrays.³⁴

In addition to the organizations already mentioned, American-born enlistees from Brookhaven also joined the Third New York Artillery, and the 92d, 131st, 158th, and 159th New York State Volunteers. All of these regiments participated in battles, some units losing hundreds of men during the war.

Of Brookhaven's 70 enlistees for whom complete service records were found, 5 were wounded, but later mustered out with their companies; 10 were captured, and 3 of these died in the prison at Andersonville; 3 died of disease; 4 were killed in battle; 10 received early discharges for disability; 19 were mustered out at the war's end; and 19 (27 percent) deserted.

The war records of the men who enlisted at Brookhaven suggest a certain instability, which is confirmed by an examination of the 1860 federal and the 1865 state censuses. Of the 70 enlistees from Brookhaven studied, only 6 were listed in the 1860 census, 9 in the 1865 census, and 10 appeared in both, for a total of 25 men, or 36 percent. Of those found in at least one census, only 2 were foreign-born, neither of whom deserted. Of the 42 native Americans studied, only 23, or 54.3 percent, appeared in at least one census, an indication that Brookhaven at this time may have been a rather unsettled community with a great deal of mobility among its inhabitants.

It is difficult to determine the mood of Brookhaven Township during

³⁴ Information on the battles and campaigns of all regiments was obtained from Frederick Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion, 1861 to 1865* (Albany, New York: J. B. Lyon Co., 1912).

the Civil War, partly because there were no newspapers published there. In some of the Township's villages there were Ladies Aid Societies organized to give aid and comfort to soldiers away from home by supplying them with otherwise unobtainable items, but no records of their specific activities could be located. The published town records show only one instance of aid to families of volunteers. The 7 March 1865 Trustee Meeting "Ordered that the child of James Downs who is in the army as a volunteer be allowed Seventy five cents per week from this date until further notice."³⁵ In general, it appears that Brookhaven was not a cohesive community during the Civil War, and this lack of unity was reflected in the high rate of desertion of its enlisted men. Even discounting the foreign-born, Brookhaven still showed a 19 percent desertion rate, high in comparison with the national average of approximately 10 percent.³⁶

Southold Township, on the other hand, a more cohesive community, tallied only a 3 percent rate of desertion. In 1873 a local historian noted,

The principal part of the land of this town is cleared, and being divided into farms of moderate size is kept in an excellent state of cultivation. . . . This town presents almost a solid and continuous settlement, from one end of its territory to the other. Nearly the whole surface is occupied by farms, and the settlements joining each other in unbroken lines are compact enough to be pleasant, and still afford sufficient room for the convenient prosecution of farming operations.³⁷

Two newspapers had been in existence for some time prior to the war, and they both continued publication throughout. The *Republican Watchman* became a protest, or Copperhead, paper. Its editor, Henry A. Reeves, was so outspoken that on 3 September 1861 he was arrested by federal authorities and confined in Fort Lafayette, a detention center for political prisoners, until early in October 1861.³⁸ The *Suffolk Times*, on the other hand, was ultrapatriotic, and in 1862 the editor, John J. Riddell, after drumming up enthusiasm for volunteering, left the paper to enlist in the army. Cordello D. Elmer continued publication of the *Times*, following Riddell's war policies, until 1865 when Riddell returned at the close of the war.³⁹

The manuscript Southold Town Records first mention the war on 7 April 1863 when the citizens voted to raise \$10,000 to pay bounties and monthly allowances to the families of volunteers. On 5 April 1864 citizens of the town voted to pay up to \$400 per substitute and to raise an

³⁵ *Records of the Town of Brookhaven, Suffolk County, New York, 1856-1885* (New York, 1893), p. 234.

³⁶ Shannon, *Organization and Administration*, 1:179.

³⁷ Bayles, *Historical and Descriptive Sketches*, pp. 360, 366.

³⁸ Margaret O'Connor Bethauser, "Henry A. Reeves: The Career of a Conservative Democratic Editor, 1858-1916," *Journal of Long Island History* 9 (Spring 1973): 39-40.

³⁹ *Greenport* [New York] *Suffolk Times*, miscellaneous clippings, Whittaker Historical Collection, Southold Public Library, New York.

additional \$20,000 for the families of volunteers, who received \$27,900 more on 4 April 1865.⁴⁰ In the village of Orient a Union meeting resolved to canvas for subscriptions for the benefit of volunteers and their families. An item in the *Suffolk Times* on 4 September 1862 reported that a special town meeting in Southold voted to give each volunteer's wife \$8 per month, and each child under eleven \$2 per month.⁴¹ The strong support given to the families of volunteers indicates that Southold accepted responsibility for those who might be left destitute in the absence of the breadwinner, and this unquestionably had a positive influence on those serving far from their loved ones.

Of the 120 men enlisting from Southold Township in late 1862, 84 were native-born and 8 foreign-born; the birth places of 28 are unknown. All of the foreigners (3 Irish, 4 Germans, and one Englishman) were listed in the 1860 federal census, and 2 were located in the 1865 state census. These people were settled in Southold and did not immigrate in order to participate in the war. None of them deserted.

The vast majority of the Southold enlistees studied joined the 127th New York State Volunteers (100 of the 120), and all but 3 of these 100 enlisted within Southold Township. In the summer of 1862 a man with family ties in Southold, Stewart L. Woodford, assistant U.S. district attorney of New York, resigned his position in order to organize a company of the 127th on the eastern end of Long Island, creating much excitement in the area.⁴² One young man wrote in his diary:

Mon, Aug 18, 1862, Southold—This evening Stuart [sic] L. Woodford commenced a series of lectures (to enlist recruits for a company to belong to the Regiment of Monitors now being raised in the first and Senatorial Districts of this State) in the Presbyterian Church—one of which is to be delivered on consecutive evenings in each village in this town [ship]. After the meeting 22 joined the co., myself among the number.⁴³

Only one Southold man deserted from this regiment, and he did so prior to his mustering. The 127th did a great deal of moving about but saw little fighting, the heaviest being at Honey Hill and Mackey's Point, South Carolina, in November and December 1864.⁴⁴

The 165th New York State Volunteers had 15 Southold men, two of whom deserted. This regiment saw a good bit of hard fighting, especially at Port Hudson and in the Red River Campaign. One deserter left after nine days as a soldier, and the other departed two months after being wounded at Port Hudson, having served for eleven months.

The 170th New York State Volunteers had only 3 Southolders, one of whom deserted forty-one days after mustering in. Although this regi-

⁴⁰ Southold Town Records, Town Hall, Southold, New York.

⁴¹ *Suffolk Times*, 9 May 1861, 4 September 1862.

⁴² *Sag Harbor* [New York] *Corrector*, 23 August 1862, microfilm, Long Island Historical Society, Brooklyn, New York.

⁴³ Diary of Ed. F. Huntting, 18 August 1862, Whittaker Historical Collection, Southold Public Library, New York.

⁴⁴ See note 34.

ment participated in heavy fighting and sustained severe casualties, the deserter never saw any fighting at all—he was gone long before the action began.

One enlistee each joined the 163d and the 176th New York State Volunteers. Both regiments were engaged in battles with severe casualties reported. Neither of these men deserted.

The record on the Southold enlistees in late 1862 stands as follows: 7 were wounded, but later mustered out with their companies; 4 were captured, of whom 2 died as prisoners; 12 died of disease; 12 were discharged with disabilities; 3 were killed in action; 78 were mustered out with their companies; and 4 deserted. All 4 deserters had enlisted in New York City rather than in Southold.

Of the 120 enlistees from Southold studied, 18 appeared in only the 1860 federal census, 27 only in the 1865 state census, and 46 appeared in both—75 percent, as compared with Brookhaven's 36 percent. None of the Southold deserters were found in either census.

Southold was a more settled community than Brookhaven before and during the Civil War. There was a deep community spirit as evidenced by the *Suffolk Times* reports of union rallies and meetings and the raising of "Liberty Poles" in several villages. The townspeople also showed their concern through financial support of the families of volunteers, voting at least \$50,000 for that purpose. The Ladies Relief Union of Southold village met weekly at the Southold Institute to sew for the soldiers.⁴⁵ On 25 January 1862 the *Sag Harbor Corrector* published a report that the Ladies Aid Society of Mattituck, a Southold Township village, had sent a variety of bedding and clothing to the soldiers.⁴⁶ The newspapers published letters sent by soldiers telling of their activities. In 1865 the *Suffolk Times* carried an item reporting that "Barton Skinner, a member of Co. H, 127th NYV arrived home on Friday . . . reports all the Suffolk County boys well and in good spirits."⁴⁷ Many of the newspapers eventually reached the soldiers through families and friends, further strengthening the bonds with home. During the national crisis of the 1860s Southold Township responded as a closely knit community; citizens supported each other, as well as the soldiers away from home. This cohesiveness probably contributed to the extremely low desertion rate (3 percent) of Southold's volunteers.

Foreign birth was the most common characteristic of the 23 deserters from Brookhaven and Southold, another indication of the community's role in the decision to desert. At least 12 of the deserters (the birth places of 2 are unknown) were born in Europe. No other pattern emerged so clearly. These 23 deserters ranged in age from 18 to 42. The average age

⁴⁵ Minute Book of the Southold Ladies Relief Union, 14 August 1861, Whittaker Historical Collection, Southold Public Library, New York.

⁴⁶ *Sag Harbor Corrector*, 25 January 1862.

⁴⁷ *Suffolk Times*, 4 May 1865.

was 26.43, somewhat higher than the average age of the entire group of enlistees (23.47). However, the average age of deserters from Brookhaven was 25.05, very close to the average age of the town's enlistees (25.88), while the average age of deserters from Southold was 30.74, much older than the average age of its enlistees (22.83). The occupations of 4 of the deserters are unknown; 4 were farmers; 4 boatmen or sailors; 3 laborers; 2 ship carpenters; 2 blacksmiths; and one each carver, cigar-maker, machinist, and printer—an assortment that does not seem to indicate any particular pattern. Thirteen of the men deserted within the first month of their muster in, 8 within the first year, and the remaining 2 left after thirteen and fifteen months. Only one of these deserters was wounded in battle; as he left shortly after, that may have prompted his decision. Of the 23 deserters studied, 5 appeared in the 1860 federal census, and only one appeared in both the 1860 federal and the 1865 state censuses, an indication that they probably were relatively mobile individuals with no strong community bonds.

In comparing the responses of Brookhaven and Southold Townships to their obligations, and the desertion rates of their enlistees (83 percent of the deserters studied enlisted in Brookhaven), it appears that a community's degree of unity and support had a direct influence on its soldiers' decision to desert. This thesis also explains the high rate of desertion among the foreign-born, most of whom lacked a strong community bond within the United States. Those foreign-born who appeared in the censuses, indicating settlement in the communities, did not desert. Geographically, Southold was generally settled, with easy communication between its component villages, while Brookhaven had widely scattered villages and large tracts of woods between, circumstances not conducive to easy intercourse. Southold seemed to find it easier to enlist men, as exemplified by the 9 February 1865 *Suffolk Times* report that Southold's official quota to be filled under the latest draft call was zero, while 19 were due from Brookhaven.⁴⁸ The 100 men from Southold enlisting in one company of the 127th Regiment created a small community of Southolders away from home, another factor that probably discouraged desertion.

The available evidence on enlistments and desertions indicates that Southold provided a stability lacking in Brookhaven, which its soldiers carried with them into military service. These Southold men had a strong sense of community support and approval, which not only added to their feelings of personal responsibility but also strengthened their obligation to meet the expectations of their home community.

⁴⁸ *Suffolk Times*, 9 February 1865.

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