



Aerial view of the Parker Farm, 1976. *Courtesy of Robert J. Hylander*

Far from Home: The Spring of 1864

Tim Garrity

*Beat! beat! drums—blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows—through doors—burst like a
ruthless force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying;
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have
now with his bride,
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or
gathering his grain,
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you
bugles blow.*

—Walt Whitman¹

Introduction

Like a monstrous storm full of destructive energy gathered offshore, the Civil War broke down upon Mount Desert Island suddenly and with great force, a giant wave that breached the shoreline and covered the landscape to its highest point, taking up young men in its torrent, and delivering them by different currents to their fates. The winds of war blew hardest in their third year, in the spring of 1864, when all who could be enlisted were fully exposed to the sustained violence of the Overland Campaign, an unrelenting surge of military power intended to finally bring the war to an end.

When the war started in the spring of 1861, Augustus Chase Savage was twenty-nine, James M. Parker was twenty, and Thaddeus S. Somes was twenty-two. They were among scores of youths from the Town of Mount Desert who suddenly became valuable commodities for an army hungry for soldiers to fill its ranks. They were enticed with enlistment bonuses and the promise of steady pay, patriotic appeals and the lure of adventure, or at the very least, a change of scene. They were prodded by newspaper editorials, rallies, speeches, sermons, and flag raisings, and eyed with suspicion if they walked the roads in civilian clothes. They followed the urgings of boyhood friends and the particular influence of young women.

And why did they sign up? Most, especially those who enlisted early in the war, were motivated by a powerful sense of patriotism and the ideal of the Union. The concept of a great American republic had been instilled in them by their grandfathers' generation, who had fought in the Revolutionary War, and their fathers' generation, who had fought in the War of 1812. Now, they believed, a new generation was called to the defense of the flag. The *Bangor Whig and Courier* intoned, "It is a contest to determine whether we are really a power in Christendom, or whether we are a loose aggregation of thirty-four separate and distinct States, entirely independent of the central government, and as such having no strength to defend ourselves against foreign aggression and not cohesion enough to command respect from any second-line power of the world."² Their cause was embodied in what Walt Whitman described as "an emblem, a mere abstraction—for the life, *the safety, of the flag*."³ The flag symbolized a united and powerful American republic, capable of standing equal on the world stage with European monarchies.

They enlisted together, boyhood friends who grew up in the same town. A veteran recalled that they had "sailed the same 'coasters,' fished in the same smacks, cut their initials, side by side, deep in the same schoolhouse desks, and together been switched therefor."⁴ Serving together in the same companies and regiments, they would share barracks and tent, dusty road and mud-filled rifle pit, enduring common hardships and danger, side by side. They fought, as historian James McPherson put it, "for cause and comrades."⁵

There were other forces at play, too. Beginning in 1862, young men bore the near-certainty of being drafted if sufficient numbers from the town did not enlist. If they purchased an exemption or hired a substitute to relieve themselves of military obligation, they faced the routine of life in a small town when every day bore reminders of childhood friends who would never return. If they went off to serve in the armed forces, they gave up their freedom for military discipline, and faced the peril of being wounded, catching a deadly disease, being captured and imprisoned in a foul prisoner of war camp, or of dying. Some in desperation fled their Island homes, going out west to try their luck in the mines, or north through the boundless woods of Aroostook County to Canada, or east to the fishing grounds of the Maritime Provinces.

Faced with an array of difficult options, three men from the Town of Mount Desert each made his choice and bore the consequences. Chase Savage accepted a commission in the navy, James Parker volunteered for the army, and Thaddeus Somes purchased an exemption from the draft and worked as the captain of a merchant ship that delivered goods to Atlantic ports. They left behind their Island homes and set out on a journey that took them far from all that was familiar.

Calm before the storm

Descriptions of antebellum Mount Desert agree that it was a placid and prosperous community, abounding in natural beauty and opportunities for commercial success. A visitor from New York, Charles Tracy, wrote in 1855, "The scene before us from our door is one of the finest of landscapes."⁶ Enthralled by sweeping views of green forests, plush fields, and mountains that fell to the blue sea on granite edges, Tracy wrote, "The little excitements and contests and doubts and hopes of the human world sink into nothing as we look out upon the mighty world of waters."⁷

The beauty and advantages of the Island were not lost on its native inhabitants, either. A schoolboy's essay spoke of its natural resources and geographic situation as a source of prosperity. In 1848, sixteen-year-old Lewis Heath declared, "The inhabitants of this Island carry on quite an extensive navigation. . . . Cod fishery too, is carried on to quite an extent and also there is a small business carried on in whale fishery which supplies many of the inhabitants with oil." Lewis and his schoolmates grew up in a world where men—and even boys his age—traveled far from home for fishing and coastal trading, to return to the Island's deep and protected harbors.

Lewis described the "sound extending into the central part of [the Island] several miles in length, at the head of this sound is a small village in which there are several mills of different kinds." This village was Somesville, then Mount Desert Island's center of commerce and the home of Thaddeus Somes and James M. Parker, boys who grew up among the mills and factories and shops and shipyards that stood by the water's edge. Flowing water—an essential source of energy—poured into the village from inexhaustible ponds via four streams. The strongest and steadiest of these was Somes Brook, an outlet for water that fell eighty feet in the course of

a mile and a half, from Long Pond, to Ripples Pond, to Somes Pond, and then to the deep water of Somes Sound. This water way was lined with the lumber, grist, and woolen mills that fueled the town's commercial success. Surrounding the town were forest and farms where, Lewis wrote, "The soil is very rough and rocky; it has some very high hills and some very beautiful forests, where a great deal of timber is cut for building vessels, houses, &c."⁸ James M. Parker wrote, "I have not seen any place I had rather live and be obliged to work for a living than where we do now."⁹

Mount Desert was a place of a rough-hewn beauty, a prosperous coastal settlement with its third generation of settlers already taking on the responsibilities of carving a life out of the land and sea. As those youngsters came into adulthood, the placid world of Mount Desert Island was drastically interrupted by a Civil War that pressured each of them to leave that peaceful place.

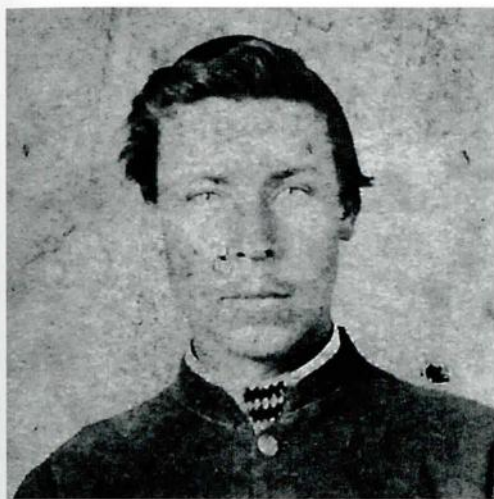
Thaddeus Somes

Thaddeus Shepley Somes was born and raised in Somesville. The various branches of his family possessed great wealth. According to the census of 1860, the three richest men in the Town of Mount Desert were Thaddeus' father Abraham Somes III, and his uncles Isaac and Jacob Somes.¹⁰ The descendants of the town's earliest colonial settler possessed thousands of acres on Mount Desert Island, land of prime value that included extensive stretches of the shoreline along Somes Sound, and large tracts of woods and farmlands. The family possessed the raw materials of industry and agriculture: lumber, farmland, and water power. Men with the Somes surname also owned the mills, yards, and factories that produced goods for market: wool, boards, shingles, and ships. Somes men were also the sea captains and merchants who carried those goods to cities up and down the Atlantic coast. Thaddeus was destined to follow his father Abraham as a shipbuilder and sea captain, one of several males of his generation that were expected to command the Somes family's wide-ranging commercial interests.

His cousin Adelma, reflecting on her early years, said "There was hardly another family in Somesville when we were young and I guess we felt quite big."¹¹ Thaddeus was a boy of a privileged but brief childhood. He first went to sea at age eleven, spending summers sailing to various

Atlantic ports and the school year in the classroom, first in Somesville and then at Corinth Academy in East Corinth, Maine. By the time he turned twenty-one, he was licensed as a master mariner. As a schoolboy, Thaddeus wrote a short essay that reflected his grooming for a life in the first rank of town citizens. He wrote, "Without Education we are hardly fit to live." He expected more from life than "the common sailor if you please that has to stand watch day after day and night after night and then thinks himself lucky if he gets a junk of salt pork and a cracker and gets into the forecabin without a kick."¹² Clearly, Thaddeus was to be no common sailor, but a man of stature in business and the community, a life befitting his family's position in society.

James Parker



James M. Parker of Somesville served in the First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment. *Collection of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society*

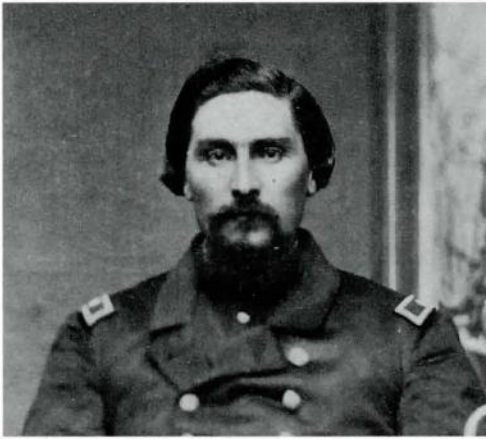
Growing up nearby was James M. Parker. Though he attended the same school, he was hardly the scion of a wealthy family. Mocking its pretensions, he referred to Somesville as "Hog Town." James was the son of John H. Parker, a farmer and carpenter who lived beyond the cluster of houses that crowded along Main Street, out along the southern shore of Somes Harbor. John owned a small farm and often worked as a carpenter in the Somes' family shipyard and took on other work as he could

find it. His farm was close by the lumber mill and shipyards that employed his skills. The elder Parker was respected in town, serving as town treasurer and moderator of town meetings during the war years. On the edge of the water, James grew up with three brothers and sister Letitia, three years his junior. Within a few minutes he could walk to school or the church or the mills and stores that made up the busy village.

Though little record remains of James' childhood, the young man that emerged from that phase of his life had many admirable qualities.

He was intelligent, humorous, affectionate towards his friends and family, temperate, religious, and equipped with mechanical skills that meant he could earn a living anywhere. He sought to improve himself in the manner of earnest young men. He wrote to Letitia on March 19, 1862, "I have been attending a course of Phrenological lectures delivered by I.V. Nichols. 10 cts. for 5 evenings, I considered my time and money well spent. I had my head examined. He told me I had more than an average head and told me it did not make any difference what I went into if I would stick too it, I should succeed."¹³

Chase Savage



Augustus Chase Savage served as an Acting Lieutenant aboard the U.S. Steamer *Delaware*.
Courtesy of Richard M. Savage, II

About five miles from Somesville, beyond a mountain on the opposite side of Somes Sound, Chase Savage grew up by a small cove in an isolated part of Mount Desert Island. Though the village of Somesville bustled with the noise of mills and shipyards, the tiny village of Asticou was marked by a profound quiet. A few widely-dispersed and small houses were scattered along the shore. Roads were few and rough, and most travel around Mount Desert

Island was accomplished by boat. Chase's grandson, Charles Savage, wrote of his grandfather's childhood, "It is difficult indeed to comprehend the utter stillness which was here in 1832 and the immediate years following. A call or 'hello' from some man to attract a neighbor's attention, the moo of a cow, the sound of a sheep and the clucking of hens; the wind, the distant roar of the sea on a southeaster, an occasional creak of a spar or flapping of a sail when near enough."¹⁴

In that silent place, the cry of a newborn could announce his own arrival to all the neighbors, as perhaps it did in 1832 when Augustus Chase Savage came into the world. Chase's grandfather, John Savage, was a Scottish immigrant who came to Massachusetts in 1770, lost a thumb

at the battle of Bunker Hill, resigned from the Continental Army as a lieutenant, married Sarah Doliver, and moved to Mount Desert in 1781 to set up a home. Among their children was Chase's father, John Jr., who bought a lot of land at the head of the harbor in Asticou. From Asticou's calm harbor, Chase wrote, his father and uncle "Went coasting and fishing in the summer and in winter they hauled out logs and cordwood to sell in western markets. They cut and hewed frames for their houses, rafted logs to Somesville for the boarding, sawed and shaved pine shingles for their houses and barns." Chase reported that his first encounter with salt water occurred when he was a toddler. His mother brought him to a ship launching, and, he wrote, "It seemed an unusual experience to me, and it caused me to cry for all I was worth, 'Stop the Ship!'"¹⁵ He survived a childhood bout with typhus, lying sick in bed, at times unconscious, visited by a doctor who arrived from Somesville on horseback, there being no roads but only a bridle path between the settlements. Chase remembered a happy boyhood marked by rough and tumble play, like climbing high into bending birch trees and lopping off the upper branches, or sending one friend up a tree while the other cut it down, a feat that was often, he said, "more pleasant for the other fellow than the climber."

But soberness grew upon him as he took up the responsibilities of a man. He later admonished his younger brothers "Not to go zonting along and thinking all the time about your play and what a good time you will have today same as I used to."¹⁶ When he was twelve, Chase accompanied his father on trips aboard the coastal schooner *The Four Sisters*, he said, "when school was not keeping." By the time he was fourteen, he was earning ten dollars per month working as a cook, cabin boy, and passenger agent aboard the schooner *Trenton*, taking passengers back and forth to the cities of Boston and New York. Other voyages took him from Calais to Philadelphia and from Northeast Harbor to Boston with loads of lumber. The industrious youth saved \$300 by the time he was eighteen, enough to purchase a quarter-share of the schooner *Protector*. At age nineteen, he made his first voyage as ship's master in the *Protector*, bringing two hundred cords of wood from Mount Desert Island to Boston. On the way, the *Protector* was caught in a fierce storm, powerful enough to sweep away a lighthouse on the coast of Massachusetts. Though losing part of his deck load, Chase brought his ship safely into Portsmouth, New Hampshire, he said modestly, "by hit rather than good wit." In his time at sea, he earned

another kind of education, developing into a serious and respected young man, experienced in the ways of the sea and the rough and tumble world of men.

Chase married Emily Manchester on December 30, 1854. In wedding photographs, the bride and groom's youthful faces contrast with the formal garments and solemn poses that fitted the occasion. Their correspondence during the war years provides insights into home and military life, and also the powerful bonds that connected them as husband and wife during trying times. Over the next ten years, Emily and Chase had three children. When the war came on, they were well established as a family and making their way in the coastal economy of the antebellum years.

Though Mount Desert was an isolated place, Chase's forays into the Atlantic world and the ready availability of newspapers kept him well attuned to national issues such as the divisive question of slavery and its place in the American enterprise. Slavery was a seismic fault that lay within the foundation of the American nation. That fault would soon fracture, just as the young men of Mount Desert were entering adulthood.

Forced choices

As early as 1834, many people expected that the issue of slavery would erupt in conflict. A conference of Congregational Churches in Hancock County declared, "While great numbers of professing Christians not only apologize for slavery and speak and write in its defense, but also perpetuate its abominations, there is no good reason to expect the peaceful termination of the system."¹⁷ In 1855, while traveling to Mount Desert by way of Boston, Charles Tracy observed that abolitionists there advocated a division of the country between North and South. In the 1860 presidential election, 62 percent of Maine's population voted for Abraham Lincoln, an outcome that set off a wave of secession resolutions in the southern states.¹⁸ The Confederate states' determination to secede, and the federal government's resolve to keep them in the Union, became an impasse that would only be resolved by armed conflict. The Civil War began on April 12, 1861 with the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. Within hours of the assault, rallies, flag raisings, and newspaper editorials all over Maine expressed widespread support for a war to preserve the Union. The *Bangor Whig & Courier* headlined, "To

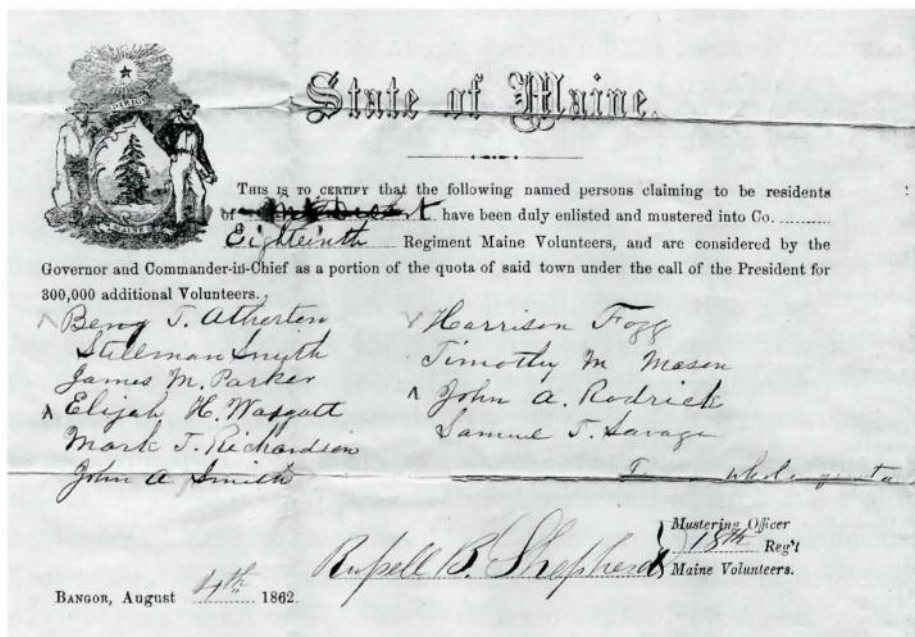
Arms, To Arms!" The newspaper declared, "Such should now be the cry of every loyal citizen until the blood shed at Charleston is atoned for." On April 19, the *Bangor Whig & Courier* announced that funding for three Maine regiments was authorized by the legislature along with bonus pay for volunteers. On April 22, the newspaper reported that five regiments, of more than one thousand men each, would immediately be raised. By April 24, four recruiting stations had opened in Bangor, signing up volunteers for the army.¹⁹

From the Town of Mount Desert, Tylston Atherton was the first to enlist, joining the Third Maine Volunteer Infantry in June 1861. In September of that year, six more Mount Desert men marched off to join Company G of the Eighth Maine Infantry Regiment. In keeping with the common policy of the time, men from the same locale often signed up to serve together. While the soldiers enjoyed the companionship of boyhood friends, the practice exposed the community and families to grievous losses if casualties hit hard at a single company. In October, seven more young men departed for the army, six of them bound for Company D of the First Maine Cavalry Regiment. In November, five more departed, and in December six more left for the service. In total, twenty-five young men from Mount Desert left for the army between the start of the war and the end of 1861.

But as the winter of 1862 turned into spring and then summer, it became apparent that the war was not going to be the glorious adventure, the prompt and decisive victory that the North hoped for and expected in the heady days of 1861. In July 1862 the federal government made provisions for mandatory conscription if the number of volunteers was insufficient to supply the army's needs. Each town was assigned a quota of men to be raised. From the quota was subtracted the number of men who had already signed up, and the number who paid a \$300 exemption fee or hired a substitute to take their place. Whatever portion of the quota that remained would have to be raised through volunteers or the draft. Volunteers were offered bonuses while conscripted men were not. The carrot-and-stick combination of bonuses and the draft created a powerful pressure for men to enlist. Yet in opposition to that pressure was the mounting evidence that the war was to be an arduous and deadly struggle, and a real danger to its participants. In June 1862, Tylston Atherton was taken prisoner and,

though released, he came home sick and was discharged from the service. The first local man to die while serving in the army was Erastus Babbage, who perished of disease in August 1862 while serving with the Fifteenth Maine Regiment in the swamps of Louisiana.

In order to avoid a draft, the citizens of Mount Desert voted at a town meeting "to raise a sum of money to pay for volunteer soldiers who may enlist in the army for Mount Desert."²⁰ Thaddeus Somes was among the men who signed a petition to call the special meeting. The town voted to raise \$100 for every soldier from the town who would enlist, and thus reduce the town's quota in the event of a draft. At the same time, the persuasive Daniel Kimball was dispatched to Bangor to negotiate a lowering of the town's quota. Throughout the war, several more town meetings were held to raise funds to support troops and their families, and even to raise funds so that men could purchase exemptions or buy substitutes.²¹ By the end of the war, at least eighty-two men from Mount Desert served in the army or the navy. Eight men hired substitutes, and eleven men paid \$300 for an exemption.²²



This muster roll for the Eighteenth Regiment Maine Volunteers (later to become the First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment) shows the names of ten men from Mount Desert who enlisted together. An eleventh, Bloomfield T. Richardson, joined the regiment in 1863.

Courtesy of the Northeast Harbor Library

James Parker

In the summer of 1862, eleven men from Mount Desert enlisted in Company C of the Eighteenth Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The company was recruited from Ellsworth, Mount Desert Island, and other nearby towns of eastern Maine. From Mount Desert, James Parker and Samuel Savage (Chase Savage's younger brother) signed up, along with Mark T. Richardson, Benjamin Atherton, Elijah Wasgatt, John A. Rodick, John Smith, Stillman Smith, Bloomfield Richardson, Charles Southard, and Timothy Mason—eleven young men from Mount Desert, all to serve in the same company and regiment.²³ Their average age was twenty-three. The group assembled in Ellsworth for departure, a scene James described in a letter to his sister Letitia. He wrote, "There were quite a lot of tears shed there. Most every woman there was digging their eyes out or trying to judging from appearances however I din't feel very badly."²⁴ James said that the doctor who conducted his physical examination told him, "There is no danger of us if we take care of ourselves." The new enlistees understood that they would be assigned garrison duty around Washington, D.C., guarding forts and manning heavy guns. Indeed the unit was soon renamed the First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment. An assignment to the heavy artillery, the *Ellsworth American* said, had "many advantages over an Infantry Regiment. . . . The supposition is, being a heavy Artillery Regiment, that it will remain stationary, or on garrison duty. It will not, like others, have to be on the move and subject to all the inconveniences, and exposures of a frequent change of position. If there are any more patriotic young men that have a wish to go into the service of their country, this presents a rare opportunity."

James and his companions quickly adapted to the rituals of camp life, and had time to maintain a lively correspondence with friends and family at home in Maine. In July 1862, James wrote to Letitia from his tent, "You must excuse mistakes as there is a drum and fife going within ten feet of me and two companies on parade in front of me. I like it so far first rate."²⁵ He said, "I would give most anything to see some young lady that I know. It would be a great treat. There is one at the door talking with one of the Eden boys and I am going to peek out and see who it is." James left his letter and got up to investigate. When he returned he wrote, "Well what do you think I found at the door. It was no one else than Lizzie Young. I was glad enough to see her. Had a nice little chat."²⁶ He reported that Lizzie was "down on all those who don't enlist. I tell you she gave some of the Somesville boys

a terrible raking. I won't tell you who they were for fear it might hurt your feelings."²⁷ He eventually did name one individual, a target for his own scorn, an old schoolmate named Lyman Somes and a cousin of Thaddeus. He reported to Letitia, "One of my correspondents viz. L.H. Somes of this living village of Hog Town, overwhelmed by remorse at his neglect of duty and fearing my just displeasure undertook to do something in the way of writing a letter but in my opinion he failed. At any rate, I did not consider it worth a second reading. He says 'I thank God that I have got clear of conscription for three years'. Noble youth. His courage and patriotism deserve great praise. Probably his monument will bear some such inscription as this, *Delce et Gloria pro patri mori*."²⁸

Scorn for shirkers was strongly felt in Company C. A soldier from Ellsworth wrote, "The one great curse to our army—*the one greatest . . .* is the unfaithfulness, and absence of soldiers from their posts."²⁹ Another soldier in the regiment, Daniel Manley of Tremont, had heard of heavy anti-war (called "Copperhead") sentiment in his hometown. He wrote,

There will be a day of reckoning for *Northern traitors*, for [we] look upon them as far worse than Southern Rebels, and the privilege of hanging a few thousands of them would be hailed with greater joy, than the capture of Richmond. For my own part, I believe that the hemp cravat is the only effectual remedy for treason, and if those copperheads do not mend their ways before the soldiers get home, I am afraid somebody will lose the number of their mess. But the State will soon be under martial law, and if necessary there will be a few men sent to enforce it, if so those fellows had better be *praying* than *preaching treason*.³⁰

Like many country boys exposed to crowded military conditions, James contracted a common camp disease, measles, but he recovered and traveled by train and steamboat with his regiment to its assigned position at Camp Stetson near Washington. From there, James wrote, "The rebs are near us. They have taken Manassus. We could hear the guns, that is the big ones only 35 miles."³¹ But for the First Maine Heavy Artillery, diseases of camp were a greater hazard than rebel guns. Thirty-six men from the regiment died while stationed near Washington, from a variety of diseases

and accidents, including typhoid, pneumonia, measles, and diarrhea.³²

When Christmas of 1862 rolled around, one member of Company C wrote to the *Ellsworth American*,

Cannot the good people of Ellsworth, Trenton, Mt. Desert &c., fill us up a generous box of roast chickens turkies, spare ribs (not too *spare*) doughnuts and other good things to tickle our pallets, gladden our hearts, and perhaps moisten our eyes—that we may have a ‘Merry Christmas?’ If that box is not forthcoming, please do not send this number of the American to Washington. It will also be remembered that government does not supply mittens or gloves, consequently, those who wish to make the soldier comfortable, as at midnight, he walks his lonely beat, can do no better thing than to send in the *forthcoming* box, mittens and socks.³³

James concurred with his comrade about the cold. He wrote to Letitia, “The nights are cold enough to freeze a brass monkey. Now there is a frost most every night. We think Old Abe would let us take a trip to the North where the weather is warmer.”³⁴

In November 1863, James picked up a rumor that “There is going to be a big move soon. They had orders to send to General Hospital all who were not able to endure a long and fatiguing march.”³⁵ There was still time for black humor, however. In December 1863, James joked that he’d captured a louse big enough to eat. He wrote, “I had half a mind to keep him for Christmas but concluded it would be too expensive as they won’t thrive on anything but fresh meat and that costs 14 cts. per lb.”³⁶

In January 1864, James was promoted to artificer, a rank that gave him responsibility for repairing wagons and other implements and equipment. He received a \$3 pay raise to \$15 per month. But, as he wrote, the greatest advantage was “I am relieved from guard duty hence forth and forever more while I am in the army. . . .”³⁷

Over the winter of 1863 to 1864, the federal army went through a transition in leadership. Ulysses S. Grant was appointed Lieutenant General,

with responsibility for all the Union forces. Major General George G. Meade was appointed commander of the Army of the Potomac. The federal command prepared for a spring offensive to pursue General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, to force it into a fight of attrition against the North's superior supply of men and material. To boost the numbers of men available for the offensive, Grant sent orders back to Washington: "Send to Belle Plain all the infantry you can rake and scrape. With present position of the armies, 10,000 men can be spared from the defenses of Washington."³⁸ The Maine First Heavy Artillery was ordered to leave its fortress post and join the veteran infantry regiments in the field. Though they had been in the army for more than two years, they were novices when it came to real marching and fighting. In their Washington forts, they had lived lives of relative luxury, sleeping in the same bed every night, eating ample rations, and foraging off the discarded supplies of soldiers stripping their packs as they left Washington for the front. They would soon discover what real war was. In March 1864 James closed a letter to Letitia, "Sergt Beal says he loves you. I have no more time to write now and must close this nonsense. Your aff. Brother, James [PS] The star spangled banner, long may it flip and flap."³⁹

Thaddeus Somes

Thaddeus Somes stood apart as the young men of the town left for war. Though he remained a civilian, he actively supported the Union



Thaddeus Shepley Somes, shortly after the war. *Collection of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society*

cause. He probably shared the political persuasion of his father, Abraham, whom the *Ellsworth American* described as "a genuine war Democrat and Union man."⁴⁰ Several times, he signed petitions to raise funds to pay for bounties for volunteer soldiers and to provide support for their families.⁴¹ At a time when many of Maine's male teachers were enlisting (the First Maine Cavalry Regiment had seventeen teachers in its ranks), Thaddeus took on responsibilities as a member of the town school committee, as befit one of the best-educated young men in the town.⁴²

Why did Thaddeus bypass military service? For a young man of his educational attainment and stature in the community, he probably could have received a commission as an officer. But he chose another option, one that was clearly legal and almost universally perceived as ethical in the society of the time. Though his name is included in a list of ninety-five Mount Desert men who were eligible for the draft, Thaddeus purchased an exemption for \$300. Perhaps he thought that his responsibilities lay in taking care of his business, in helping to run the town—especially the schools, and even in providing the \$300 payment that was used by the government to finance bonuses for volunteers. Yet, it must have been difficult for him to watch as other young men went off to be soldiers and, as the war wore on, to see so many of them—at least twenty-one—come back in coffins, or not at all.

Thaddeus avoided conscription legally. An unknown—and unknowable—number of men left town—skedaddled—to avoid the draft illegally. Emily Savage wrote, “I dread to hear of the draft for half that are liable to it have gone off.”⁴³ Chase Savage wrote home to ask Emily if any one of the young men at home had gone to the Magdalenes— islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, over six hundred miles to the northeast, good fishing grounds and a good place to hide out until the Provost Marshall had passed.⁴⁴

Harvey Nickerson might be an example of someone who fled Mount Desert to avoid the draft. Samuel Savage wrote to Chase, “I am not no Hearvey Nickerson but a long ways from it. There is no chickens bread in me. . . .”⁴⁵ Harvey Nickerson, thirty years old, is listed in the census of 1860, but not in the census of 1870, meaning that he must have left town during the decade between.⁴⁶ That he and his wife Nancy were divorced in 1863 implies some family rift during the war.⁴⁷ It is difficult to know who else left to avoid the draft, but the census of 1860 shows a total of 207 men who would have been of military age sometime during the Civil War years. By the census of 1870, only 80 of those men remained. Surely many of them died in the Civil War and others relocated for greener pastures in the Ohio Valley or further west. But there is no doubt that many skedaddled during the war years.

Thaddeus paid his \$300 exemption and remained a civilian. He outfitted the 133-ton brig *Adelma* to serve as a merchant ship, delivering lumber and

coal along the New England and Mid-Atlantic coast.⁴⁸ There is a hint of discomfort in the family account of his role during the Civil War. His granddaughter, Virginia Somes Sanderson, became a prominent author of local history. In 1982 she wrote that Thaddeus Somes was “excused from the service . . . because he was the sole support of his mother and ailing father, who died in 1868.”⁴⁹ However, there is no other support for this contention. He was excused because he paid a fee for exemption. The draft registration records do not record that he was the sole support of ailing parents, as they did note for others.⁵⁰ And finally, despite the claim that he needed to care for an ailing father, there is the ship’s log of the *Adelma*, which shows that Thaddeus was away at sea for almost the entire year of 1864.

Chase Savage

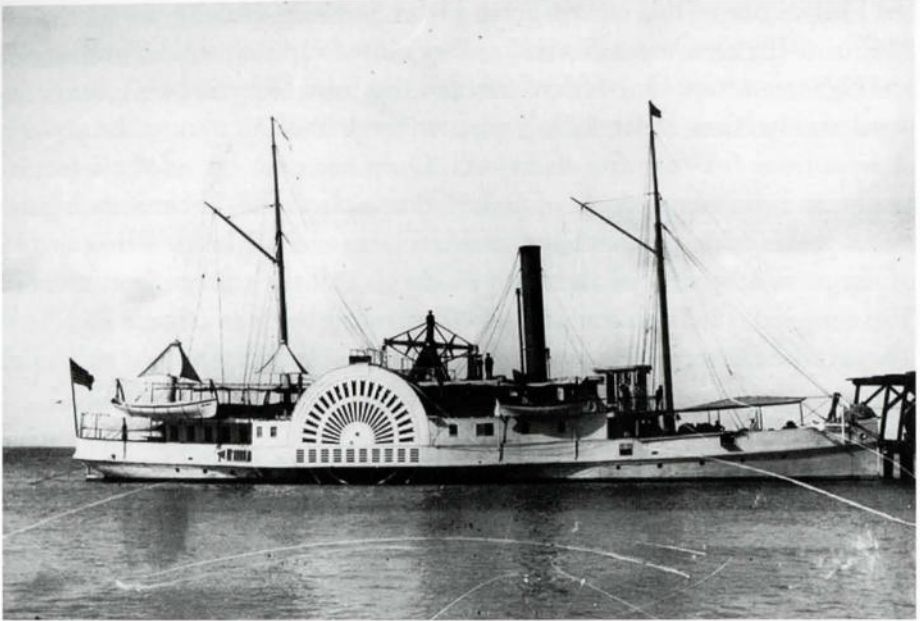
Chase Savage evaluated his options, too. His brother Sam, nine years his junior, was serving in the First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment. Chase was well established in his career as a mariner, with experience and a good reputation. He waited for a better opportunity than that of an enlisted soldier or navy tar. His chance came in early 1864, when he was offered a commission as an Acting Lieutenant in the United States Navy. His brother Sam wrote to congratulate him on his new appointment. “I expect you are having a good time this winter—off with the milletarry and got a commish to. That is worth something. I am glad you are so lucky. I wish I was with you but I am doing pretty well here.” It was an honor for a Mount Desert man to be commissioned as an officer. With evident pride Sam added, “Oh I want you to have your picture taken in your uniform and with your sword on and send it to me won’t you.”⁵¹

Chase was first assigned to a training ship, the U.S.S. *Savannah*. He wrote to Emily on January 20, 1864, “As this is my first day on a man of war, I will drop you a line to let you know I am well and hope this will find you are the same.” Thus began a correspondence that would last until Chase’s discharge following the end of the war in 1865. After two month’s training aboard the *Savannah* in New York, he was assigned to the U.S. Steamer *Delaware*, a vessel rigged fore and aft with sails, but powered by an engine that could move the ship at an impressive twenty knots under full steam.

He was one of five officers aboard who bore responsibility for a crew of 115 men. The crew was a diverse lot; they came from thirteen different states and eight countries. One-fifth of the crew was from Maryland and almost an equal number from Ireland. They were strikingly short in stature; the average crewman was five feet, five inches tall. Only one man exceeded six feet in height, and two men were only four feet, nine inches tall.⁵² The crewmembers' stature told a tale of childhood malnutrition and hardship. Chase wrote of the men, "about ½ of them are Blacks . . . all the rest are landsmen."⁵³ There was a distinct delineation in social standing between officers and men. Though the *Delaware* was assigned to fight the Confederates, the ship's log often revealed more frequent conflict between officers and men.

On March 27, 1864, the *Delaware* left Baltimore, bound for the mouth of the James River on the coast of Virginia. The James River was critical to the Union war strategy; it was navigable far into the interior of Virginia, and flowed past Richmond. Its twisting course provided a highway for the Union Navy to support ground forces near the Confederate capital. The *Delaware's* mission on the river was to perform picket duty, transport men and supplies, and keep the James clear of torpedoes.⁵⁴ Much of her work was conducted in support of monitors, the ironclad ships that functioned as water-borne armored tanks of the day.

The early days of 1864 were spent in preparation for a new season of fighting. Though the *Delaware's* crew prepared for conflict, on some days the foremost enemy was boredom. A typical entry in the ship's log would report the wind and the weather, and the pressure in the steam engine. "Exercise on the broad side guns." Or, "Capt went to the flagship together with the doctor wind fresh and weather clear."⁵⁵ The tedium sometimes boiled over into conflict. Chase reported difficulty getting along with his commanding officer, and he wasn't alone. He confided to Emily that he was "well contented since there has become a mediator between me and the Comdg. Officer but they don't get along any better than I did as they have had to or three spats all ready."⁵⁶ The crew drilled with the ship's guns and small arms, transported officers to other ships, loaded up on coal, and maintained constant steam pressure in the engines. Chase took a boy's delight in watching the ironclads fire their big guns. He wrote to Emily, "It is fun to see some of the monitors fire the 15 inch guns. I tell you they make the water fly nicely."⁵⁷



The U.S. Steamer *Delaware*. Courtesy of the U.S. Naval Historical Center

On the morning of April 29, 1864 the *Delaware* was on blockade duty about seventy miles downstream from Richmond. Nearby were four ironclads and a fleet of gunboats. Chase wrote to Emily, “It seems to be rather dull here just now but I hope that we shall have some encouraging news by and by as most everyone is expecting exciting times both by sea and land forces but it is hard to tell whether things will turn in our favor or not but *we* must hope for the best and trust to luck for our safety.” By nine in the evening of the same day, news had arrived that there was “a movement on foot in regard to our Union Forces that must be kept Strictly Secret.”⁵⁸ He added, “Don’t get alarmed or be uneasy about me for I have a presentment that I shall come out all right and be permitted to meet you all again when this cruel ware is over. If fate should be against us I hope that we may meet where parting is no more.”⁵⁹

The Spring of ‘64

By the spring of 1864 the war had been going on for three years. The euphoria of the first weeks; the élan of the summer of 1862, when all those Mount Desert boys went off to serve in the heavy artillery; the grim summer of 1863 with its draft riots and bloody battles like Gettysburg—all seemed long ago. The war appeared to grind on with a chronic level of

hardship and still there was little apparent progress towards victory. Prior to May 1864, sixty-six men from Mount Desert had enlisted in the army. No more would be enlisted thereafter.

In the first three years of the war, at least nine local boys had died, most of them from diseases they acquired in army camps. Only two had been killed in combat. Emory Pierce and Oliver Harris both died at the battle of Cedar Mountain, Virginia in August 1862. Of course, such losses were devastating to the families and friends of the deceased. But the death rate up to this point was minor compared to the trauma that awaited in the spring of 1864. In this grim dark spring, when the sun did not shine for an entire month, fourteen Mount Desert men were killed in action or died shortly afterwards of their wounds, more than in all the previous three years. The difference in the death rate was linked directly to the change of senior leadership of the Union Army. Ulysses S. Grant had been appointed in the place of a long series of generals who seemed reluctant to fight. Abraham Lincoln had complained that one of Grant's predecessors, General George McClellan, was afflicted with "the slows."⁶⁰ The *Ellsworth American* noted that "Grant does not stop to mount heavy guns and approach by the regular system inaugurated by McClellan."⁶¹ Instead, Grant relentlessly pursued his Rebel enemy, seemingly without regard to the casualty rate. For families at home in Mount Desert, the crushing news would arrive in a letter or appear in a newspaper casualty list, the former world would go spinning away in the dark, and loved ones would be left with a sorrow to be carried for the rest of their days.

Ever optimistic, the *Ellsworth American* declared, "There will be still more hard fighting before this campaign is ended and the great victory won, which will bring peace and a restored Union. From all the reports, and the indications from officials from Washington, everything looks hopeful. . . . Before this reaches you, you may have more and fuller news, and the pleasure of reading of a splendid triumph."⁶² There was still a strong belief that given enough men for the fight, the North, with its superior manpower and material resources, would prevail over the South in a battle of attrition. The Lincoln administration was determined to see the war through. The nation seemed to be so far across the wide flood of war that going back would be harder than pressing on. There would be no turning back. The war would continue for almost another year.

Chase Savage

From the city of Richmond, the James River flowed eastward for seventy miles through the heart of the Confederacy to its mouth on the Atlantic Ocean that was firmly under the control of the Union Navy. The river was both an obstruction and a life-line for the federal forces. Flowing from west to east, it presented a barrier to a Union Army moving north to south. But the Union Navy could use the river to enter central Virginia, occupy portions of it to defend an army crossing, work in support of Union ground forces by moving troops and supplies where they were needed, and prevent the use of the river by Confederate forces. Intent on disrupting this highway, the Confederates established fortified gun batteries on high points along its sides, floated torpedoes (today's mines) downriver to explode against the hulls of Union ships, and placed snipers on the banks to fire on exposed sailors. The lightly-armed *Delaware's* mission was to send out crews in small boats to find and remove the deadly torpedoes from the navigation channel and to provide support for other ships, particularly the ironclads, whose armor could withstand musket and artillery fire and whose big guns could do the most damage to the enemy. As officer of the deck, Chase Savage recorded in the ship's log the *Delaware's* progress up the James River as it drew closer to the center of the conflict.

On May 5, 1864, with a light wind out of the southwest, the *Delaware*, joined by six monitors and numerous gunboats, began its journey near the river's mouth. The ship's log noted that the fleet "formed in line of Battle and started up James River." The *Delaware* "Sent out boats with grapnels to drag for torpedoes."⁶³ On May 9, one of the *Delaware's* sister ships, the *Commodore Jones*, was destroyed by a mine. Chase wrote that the *Jones* "made a bold advance about 4 times her length ahead of us. She had stopped her wheels and was drifting back with the tide towards us and all at once the explosion took place and she was blown to atoms in less than you could count 2. The fragments flew all around us. Some pieces went in the air 100 feet. One piece struck an oar in one of our boats and broke it. So you may judge that we was pretty near danger. We have some of her crew on board of this vessel. 10 of those that we picked up were wounded and have been sent to the hospital."⁶⁴

Two days later, the ship's log noted that the crew "Picked up the dead body of a seaman late of the Comdor Jones."⁶⁵ Chase was

assigned the task of leading a burial detail. That evening, he wrote to Emily, "This morning I have been on shore with a boat crew digging a grave for another man that was picked up this morning. The[y] look dreadfully and are verry ofencive however it is an act of deacency and respect to do all that we can for them."⁶⁶ On May 17, the *Delaware* arrived below Chaffin's Bluff, a Confederate fortification about eight miles downstream from Richmond. As they neared the Confederate capital, they began to hear sounds of battle. The log recorded "Sharp firing among the troops on shore."⁶⁷

As she neared the epicenter of the war in Virginia, the *Delaware* seethed with internal strife. On May 7 one of Chase's fellow officers of the deck, H.P. Livermore, was put in irons for striking a man, and the man—J. McGinnis—was "sent to the brig in double irons for insolence to officer of the deck."⁶⁸ Over the course of the journey up the James River, men were put in irons for swearing, sleeping on watch, and for "going slow."⁶⁹ When sailors John North and James Donal were ordered under arrest, the ship's log noted, "Jesse McLain was ordered to Stand centery over them and refused saying that he would be damned if he would do any such thing and said that he would not submit to orders from officers of this Ship called us all Dam Suns of Biches and was put in Irons by foarce."⁷⁰ More trouble attended the crew. One sultry day in June, all hands were allowed to bathe in the river, and a young black sailor, Alfred Richardson, a former plasterer from Baltimore, drowned. Though the river was dragged with the same grapnels used for detecting mines, no sign of him was found. The next day his goods were sold at auction.⁷¹

By June 3, the *Delaware* and the rest of the Union fleet had advanced as far up the James as they could go. To prevent the Confederate ironclad *Virginia* from coming downstream, the federal navy placed obstructions in the river near Farrar's Island, a place where the winding James doubled back on itself, forming almost a complete loop. By Farrar's Island, the ship lay at anchor, always near the six ironclads. Artillery batteries were dug into the island by the federal forces and on the opposite river bank by the Confederates. From this place the *Delaware* would advance no further upstream for many months; the ship was mostly stationary as the great armies of the North and South engaged in a fierce struggle.



Chase Savage, aboard the U.S. Steamer *Delaware*, was only a few miles from the First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment near Petersburg. Here, the ironclads and steamships of the Union Navy patrol the James River. Farrar's Island is shown in the upper left, and the outskirts of Petersburg in the lower left. *Detail from Major W. C. Hughes, "Hughes Military Map of Richmond & Petersburg, Va." (Washington, DC: Phillip and Solomons, 1864).*

Courtesy of the David Rumsey Map Collection, www.davidrumsey.com

Chase wrote to Emily, "I will again write you a few lines to let you know that I am still here and in the same place and shall have to add that I am still alive or you may think that I have kicked the bucket but I am happy to say that my health is still good and I hope this will find you all the same."⁷² The stalled progress meant he had more time to write and more time to reflect on scenes of family and home that contrasted so sharply with the violent world nearby. He wrote, "Well Emily you must try and be happy with your friends and the children. What a great blessing that we are all in good health

and have no broken legs or mangled boddies. I have got a straw hat today. Cost me 2 dollars and it is just what I want in the hot sun.”⁷³

Even though Chase and the *Delaware* were only a few miles from the epicenter of the war, Emily often had more current information on the fate of local men who were in the conflict. In a letter dated May 23, Emily reported to Chase that his brother Sam, who was convalescing at home in an attempt to recover from tuberculosis and chronic diarrhea, had given up his try at recuperation, and was going to rejoin his unit, the First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment. “Sam has left us,” Emily wrote, “for the seat of war.”⁷⁴

James Parker

On May 7, Elijah Wasgatt of the First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment wrote to Emily from Fort Sumner near Washington, “We fare well here as yet and I expect we shall fare well as long as we stay here, but some are uneasy and say they want to go to the front. I think such ones don’t know which side there bread is buttered on. I am satisfied that I am better off here than if I was to the front.”⁷⁵ Regardless of Wasgatt’s apprehensions, marching orders arrived, and the regiment left the safety of the national capital and headed for the battlefields of Virginia. The *Ellsworth American* reported, “The telegraph announces the 1st Maine Heavy Artillery as having gone to the front—they go as infantry, it is said.”⁷⁶ Perhaps it was this notice that prompted Sam Savage to abandon his attempt at convalescence and hurry south to rejoin his regiment.



Letitia Parker was three years younger than her brother James. Their wartime correspondence is in the collection of the Mount Desert Island Historical Society. Photo courtesy of Richard M. Savage, II; restoration by Sydney Roberts

James Parker wrote to Letitia,

I shall not write much for marching orders have come at last. The 1st Me. H.A. is ordered to the front. We are nearly packed up and expect to move any moment. I did not know when I should get another chance to write so I thought I would write now for I knew you would be anxious if you

did not hear from me. We are going as infantry and have shelter tents. Two men camp together and each man carries half the tent. Our fare for the future will consist of hard tack and salt pork, but we set up a big cheer when we heard we were going. I presume before a week we shall be where the cold lead flies round careless. They handle their guns very careless. They have been known to point it at a man and fire. Of course I shall write to you occasionally . . . for I shall probably have plenty to write about.⁷⁷

The anticipated Union military offensive, known to history as the Overland Campaign, began on May 4, 1864 when the Army of the Potomac crossed over the Rapidan River in Virginia. The campaign was an enormous military operation and bloody like no other before. More than 115,000 Union and 64,000 Confederate troops were engaged in the various battles of the Overland Campaign. Over the course of it, more than 90,000 of those men from both sides were killed, wounded, or captured.⁷⁸

General Ulysses S. Grant was persistent and aggressive—unlike his predecessors, who would often retreat to the protection of Washington after a defeat, or fail to follow up victory with the pursuit of a weakened and retreating enemy, and usually allowed many weeks to pass between major engagements. Evidence of Grant's doggedness was contained in his famous pledge "to fight it out on this line, if it takes all summer."⁷⁹ When one battle drew to a standstill, he would disengage his army and quickly maneuver to force another contest. The campaign was characterized by constant fighting, with little time for soldiers to rest between battles. The result was severe attrition from casualties and an erosion of morale and combat-readiness.

The battles of the Overland Campaign began about sixty miles north of Richmond, in a dense expanse of wooded ground called The Wilderness. From there, the armies shifted to the south, the Confederates moving to the right, and the Union forces moving to the left, like boxers staggering across a ring, throwing punches with every step. Unlike previous Union offensives that set the capture of Richmond as the chief objective, now the target was Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia itself. By moving quickly to get around Lee's right flank, to stand between the Confederate

Army and Richmond, Grant wanted to force the Rebels to fight out in the open, away from the protection and supplies available in their capital city. The campaign resulted in a series of battles: The Wilderness on May 4 and 5, Spotsylvania from May 8 to May 21, the crossing of the North Anna River on May 23 to 26, and again at Cold Harbor over the period May 31 to June 12.

For the First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment, the recruiter's promise that the duty assignment would be free from "all the inconveniences, and exposures of a frequent change of position," no longer applied.⁸⁰ A correspondent from the company wrote of the transfer of the unit to the front,

The 1st. Me. Artillery has at last left its *old home* in the defences of Washington. . . . On Saturday, the 14th inst., we received orders to pack up, and be all ready to march at 12 o'clock. This announcement was greeted with every demonstration of joy by the men, and the process of packing knapsacks and disposing of all clothing, &c not absolutely necessary to soldiers in the field, was quickly completed. Our old muskets were 'turned in,' and in place of them we were furnished with new Springfield rifles. The men stopped to buy pies in Washington and went aboard a steamer, the City of Albany. . . . There appears to be a large number of soldiers at this place, as most of the hillsides are covered with tents, and wagon trains are moving in all directions.⁸¹

As the First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment moved toward the front lines, it made a startling impression. Led by officers on prancing horses and a regimental band playing a stirring tune, the men sang as they marched. Their blue uniforms were trimmed with the artilleryman's red piping and their brass buttons, buckles, and shoulder plates gleamed in the sun. The regiment's ranks, at eighteen hundred strong, had many times as many men as the depleted regiments of veterans, some of which had been whittled down to a few hundred. The column of Maine soldiers was over a half mile long, and took over ten minutes to pass by, prompting one veteran to ask what division this was.⁸²

As the long column got nearer the front, the regimental historian

recorded, "We began meeting ambulances loaded with wounded men, some on foot with their arms in slings and heads bandaged." These worn and exhausted veterans saw the eager faces of the Maine men, and decided they did not like them. A New York veteran reported, "These bloody wrecks of men derided the new-comers. Men would tauntingly point to a shattered arm, or a wounded leg, or to bloody wounds on their faces," and predict a similar fate for the Maine men. A wounded soldier pointed the way towards the battlefield with a gashed arm that dripped blood. As the regiment passed, one group of idlers would call for a new arrival's attention, and then suddenly flip the edge of a blanket to uncover the contorted face of a corpse at the roadside. Such displays soon quieted the band. Other veterans would assume a tone of mock solicitude and inquire where the regiment's cannon were, asking, "Why, dearest, why did you leave your earthwork behind you?" When the First Maine soldiers stopped to rest and catch a nap, their knapsacks were liable to be looted of delicacies they'd brought from Washington.⁸³

That first night in the field, the Maine men slept fitfully to the sound of sniper fire and awoke to the scream of artillery shells going over their heads, the regimental historian wrote, "much too close to be appreciated."⁸⁴ On May 19, at the outskirts of Spotsylvania Courthouse, the regiment first met the enemy when they were hastened to protect supply wagons that had come under attack. A young officer from Ellsworth, Lieutenant George W. Grant, was killed leading a charge, waving his sword. His last words were, "Boys, this is what we came out here for."⁸⁵ Another man barely escaped death when a bullet was stopped by a metal matchbox in his breast pocket. Another opened his mouth to yell "Hurrah!" so that a bullet passed through his cheeks, sparing his teeth.

The inexperience of the regiment's officers was evident in their use of tactics learned in outdated military manuals and practiced on the parade ground. The First Maine soldiers were ordered to step out from the cover of the woods to stand in perfect rows on an open field and fire volleys into the enemy lines. Had they taken cover, casualties would have been much lighter. Veteran troops had learned to dig themselves a defensive hole in the ground as soon as they were confronted by the enemy. After the fight at Spotsylvania, an officer wrote, "we could outdig the diggers in getting into our holes."⁸⁶

For raw troops, they acquitted themselves bravely and successfully repulsed the raiders. But the cost was very high. The regimental historian wrote, "Until now we had actually known nothing of the anguish we were to experience when we gave to our own comrades the rude burial in the long trench upon the battlefield." In its first engagement, the regiment suffered the loss of almost one-third of its men—532 casualties, including 155 killed. Company C suffered 61 casualties out of its original strength of 150, including eighteen killed, two of whom were from Mount Desert. One was Harrison Fogg, a twenty-three-year-old private, and the other was Elijah Wasgatt, who just twelve days earlier had confided his apprehensions to Emily Savage. Upon learning the news of her friend Elijah, who left a grieving widow and young child, Emily wrote to Chase, "What a crewel war this is. I never half realized it before what a dreadfull sight of brave men there are killed and wounded. How they must suffer and it is all caused through wickedness. Oh Chase I shall try to pray for you always that your life may be spared. Our children don't forget to ask God every night to take care of their father."⁸⁷ Chase wrote in reply, "I am very sory about Elijah. His family must feel very bad."⁸⁸

Families turned to the *Ellsworth American* for news of the Spotsylvania fight. The paper reported, "The Maine 1st. Artillery, acting as infantry, had just arrived, and was in the thickest and hardest of that brilliant fight. . . . But it is with sadness, and with a heart deeply moved by grief, that we have also to record the fact that the Maine 1st has dearly earned its enviable name for bravery and extorted high praise from its commanding officers, for its veteran service."⁸⁹ Bereaved families were advised that "It is useless for the friends of those who have fallen in battle to go to the front at this time to procure their bodies, as the request is denied in all cases. All the dead are carefully buried, and their names are placed upon boards over their graves, so that their friends can find them after."⁹⁰ In reality, families considered themselves fortunate if the bodies of their dead could be recovered at all.

In addition to their horror at the appalling number of deaths, the people of Maine were alarmed at the numbers and condition of the wounded. Forty-three men in Company C were wounded in their first combat experience. Mark T. Richardson, from the Beech Hill area of Mount Desert, was shot in the leg at Spotsylvania.⁹¹ A few days later his cousin from the nearby village of Sound, Bloomfield T. Richardson, also

suffered a gunshot in the leg, at a subsequent battle near Totopotomoy.⁹² The *Ellsworth American* reported reassuringly, "Governor Cony has started for Washington to ascertain personally that the wounded soldiers from Maine have every care and attention that can possibly be bestowed on them."⁹³

On June 4, as he absorbed the news, Chase wrote to Emily from his berth on board the *Delaware*,

What a sad thing it is that so many of our men around their
have been killed. Poor fellows No one knows in what state
they died or how much they suffered as the soldier has no
kind wife or mother to sooth them in their last moments.
The seen for the human heart must be awful to look upon
where so many of our brave men are slane and appearantly
to no purpose. If this war last through this summer, I
believe there will be more killed and die than there has
been for the whole ware.⁹⁴

Chase's fear came literally true. Spotsylvania was just a foretaste of what was to come. After Spotsylvania, the armies fought at the crossing of the North Anna River and again at Cold Harbor. Once more, the Army of the Potomac disengaged, turned left, and now crossed the James River a few miles downstream from Farrar's Island and the *Delaware*, across a pontoon bridge hastily thrown across the river. The objective was Petersburg, a railroad junction that served as a vital source of supplies for the city of Richmond and the Confederate Army. If Petersburg could be captured, it would be impossible for the Confederates to keep Richmond supplied with food, and they would be forced out into the open for a fight to the finish.

The Union forces left their trenches at Cold Harbor with sufficient stealth so that several Union divisions had a chance to capture Petersburg quickly, before it could be reinforced. For two days, large portions of the federal army faced woefully undermanned Confederate barricades. But the opportunity went unrecognized, and the delay gave the Confederates time to rush troops and artillery to the city's defenses. The First Maine's regimental historian wrote, "Had Petersburg been captured and held on the night of the 15th, Lee's army, cut off from all its sources of supplies, must have come out of his intrenchments and fought the final and decisive

battle of the war, or would have been shut up there to be starved into a speedy surrender."⁹⁵ On June 18, General George Meade, the commander of the federal forces before Petersburg, seething with impatience and frustration, ordered an assault without further delay. His order to General David Birney, commander of the II Corps that included the First Maine Heavy Artillery, read, "You have a large corps, powerful and numerous, and I beg you will at once, as soon as possible, assault in a strong column. The day is fast going, and I wish the practicability of carrying the enemy's line settled before dark."⁹⁶

By now, Confederate forces under General P. T. Beauregard had established heavily fortified defenses and manned them with veteran troops. Confederate artillerymen loaded their guns with canister shot that spewed metal fragments. The artillery was arrayed so that anyone approaching the works would have to walk through a leaden gale. A survivor wrote that the Confederates were "now strongly posted in a new line, the best that engineering skill could devise, bristling with rifles in the hands of veteran troops, with artillery at every advantageous point, covering every square rod of the territory between the lines."⁹⁷

The First Maine was ordered to attack these defenses, charging across wide-open ground, exposed at every step to musket and artillery fire. Such an assault might have worked three days earlier, before the fortifications were fully armed and manned, but now it was doomed to failure. The regiment formed a line along the Prince George County Court House Road that paralleled the line of the Confederate forts. The road's planked surface lay behind an embankment that faced the enemy and gave the men a place to get ready in relative safety. About five hundred yards of open field separated the attackers and the defenders. The day was hot. In the shade of tall oak trees, the men prepared themselves. Their knapsacks and blankets were placed in a pile to the rear, and guards posted to watch them. Many wrote final letters home. They fixed their bayonets and loaded their muskets with a single round, to be fired only when they reached the fortifications. They filled their cartridge boxes and their canteens. Then, with white faces, they waited.⁹⁸

The First Maine was to be the point of a spear to pierce the Confederate defenses, attacking in three successive lines of four companies each. The first

line was to lead the charge across the field, reach the enemy fortifications, clear away obstructions, and capture the trench. The second line was to provide covering fire for the first, to keep the enemy off their parapets and prevent them from firing, and then assist in clearing the trenches. The third line was to follow the others and provide a final rush to drive the Confederates out of their defenses. Two other regiments, the Sixteenth Massachusetts and the Seventh New Jersey, were to follow the First Maine and exploit the breach. On the left and right, other regiments were to join in the attack, giving the Rebels a broader front to defend, and keeping them from focusing their fire on the First Maine.

Two heavy artillery regiments were involved in the assault, the First Maine and the First Massachusetts. All the other regiments were composed of veterans, men who thought it was time for the pampered "heavies" to take a turn in charging against fortified positions. The veterans cried, "Played out! Let the 1st Maine go! Let the 1st Mass go!"⁹⁹ The men of the Sixteenth Massachusetts, who were to follow on the heels of the First Maine, were serving the last month of their enlistment. They had been in the field for nearly three years, fighting at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and all the battles of the current campaign, including the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and Cold Harbor.¹⁰⁰ One Massachusetts captain wrote, "We, our brigade, have made fourteen charges upon the enemy's breastworks, although at last no amount of urging, no heroic examples, no threats, or anything else, could get the line to *stir one peg*."¹⁰¹ They had not the slightest inclination to risk their lives for what their experience told them would be a suicidal mission.¹⁰² A New Jersey officer wrote, "The First Maine Heavy Artillery lead the column, the Sixteenth Massachusetts following, and this regiment [Seventh New Jersey] behind the latter regiment. The Sixteenth Massachusetts failed to follow the First Maine."¹⁰³ The other heavy artillery regiment, the First Massachusetts, was convinced to stay low by a nearby regiment of veterans, who told them, "Lie down you damn fools, you can't take them forts!"¹⁰⁴ A First Massachusetts survivor wrote, "The old campaigners were in front and knew better than to charge through a slaughterpen."¹⁰⁵

When they received the order to charge, the First Maine rose up in perfect order, and started across the field. The Sixteenth Massachusetts left the protection of the road along with the First Maine, but when they

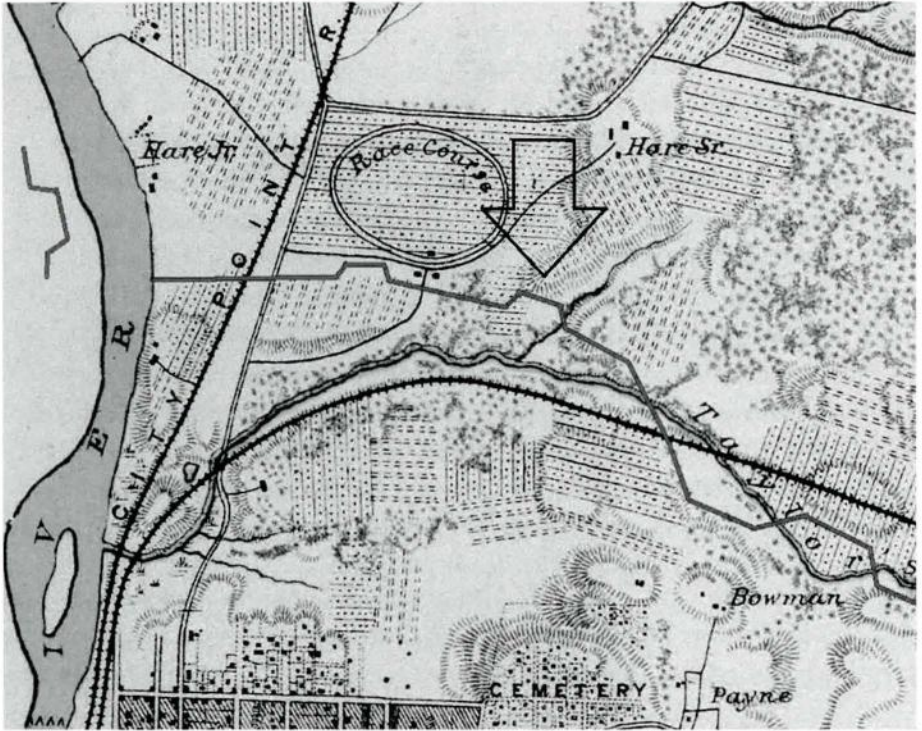
confronted heavy fire, they quickly fell back to their starting positions, while the First Maine moved ahead, now all alone. A survivor of the assault recalled, "The enemy's firing along their whole line was now centered into this field. The earth was literally torn up with iron and lead. The field became a burning, seething, crashing, hissing hell. . . . So in ten minutes those who were not slaughtered had returned to the road or were lying prostrate upon that awful field of carnage."¹⁰⁶ A Massachusetts observer reported,

Bullets whistled like rain. The Maine boys fell fast. 'Forward men,' could be heard from their line. Half the distance is traversed, canister is let loose by the Rebels and dirt is flying, yet the Maine men who crept up the bank do not flinch, but sullenly close up ranks, now decimated. For over four hundred yards the lines throughout the brigade clung together, but it seemed a fruitless attempt, much more so than it did at the outset. After advancing fifty or seventy-five yards the whole brigade broke in the centre and portions of the regiments on the right lit out for the woods on that side, trying to get shelter from the murderous fire. The left wing went into the woods on the left. Both wings opened fire from the woods.¹⁰⁷

Of the 900 men who left the road, 632 fell in the field before Petersburg.¹⁰⁸ The First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment suffered the greatest proportional loss in a single day's combat of any regiment in the Civil War.¹⁰⁹

"What did it amount to?" said a witness. "I doubt if a man on the Union side saw a Confederate during the charge. They were completely sheltered by a strong earthwork."¹¹⁰ After the battle, the officer who called the roll, H.P. Smith, struggled to continue when the names of school-mates went unanswered.¹¹¹ The regimental commander, Colonel Daniel Chaplin, was physically unwounded, yet suffered greatly. He was said to have cried inconsolably that night, raging at his superiors, "Where is my Regiment, where's my Regiment?" Gesturing to the field full of dead and wounded he cried, "There it is, there they are."¹¹² A fellow officer reported, "Colonel Chaplin escaped in the butchery; but it struck him a mortal blow, from

which he did not recover. His men belonged to the same neighborhood with him. He had organized them; he had led them from the forests of Maine. They were his great family. When he saw them sacrificed under his eyes by a fantasy as deadly as useless, a melancholy discouragement took hold on him. Sombre presentiments besieged him. He was surrounded by phantoms.”¹¹³ Chaplin was killed by a Confederate sharpshooter on August 17, 1864.



The First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment formed for the assault along the road at the upper center of the map, and attacked across an open cornfield between the Hare Farm and an abandoned racetrack. Confederate fortifications were constructed so that artillery and rifle fire could be concentrated on every inch of the open ground. *From U.S. Government, Engineer Bureau, "Map of the approaches to Petersburg and their defenses" (Washington: 1863).*

Courtesy of the David Rumsey Map Collection, www.davidrumsey.com

Samuel Savage returned to the battlefield from Maine on the day after the assault. He wrote a two-part letter to his sister-in-law Emily. For the benefit of his emotionally-fragile father, the first page was sanitized a little. He complained, "We are lying in the front line of works and it is hot enough I can tell you but I stand it pretty well and am smart [healthy] but lonesome for all the island boys are gone." The second part was intended

for his hardier sister-in-law Emily to see, so she would know what had really happened. Sam wrote,

The day before I got to my Regt they numbered over 1000 men and was ordered to charge on the enemys works which was a strong place, not far from here . . . they were to charge across on open field to the enemies batteries but they were about all cut down before they got half way there by the storm of grape and canister and musketry that was hurled into them. There was only 334 men came out. All the rest were killed and wounded and the most of the dead lay on the field now the sharp shooters would not let our men take them off and there probably were a great many wounded that have laid there and starved to death isn't that cruel.¹¹⁴

Sam wrote, "George Kittridge was not killed when I wrote you but he went into that fight and never came out and James M. Parker too. I suppose the poor fellows lay there and a great many more it makes me feel sad to write this so I will stop. I am in hopes some of the missing were taken prisoners and are still alive but it is doubtful."¹¹⁵

After the disaster, the generals of the opposing armies exchanged messages. General Meade requested a truce, so that, "For one or two hours, during which time unarmed parties with medical officers can, under a flag of truce, bury the dead and remove the wounded of each army." His confederate counterpart, General Beauregard, declined this request on the grounds that he saw "no occasion from recent operations for such a request." Yet a witness remembered the cries and the sight of the wounded men, lying helpless between the lines, whom no one could help. He wrote, "It was an appalling sight, to take a desperate chance for life and peer over the breastworks across this field of slaughter, strewn thick with the blue-coated bodies of those sterling sons of Maine, decomposing in the fierce rays of a Southern sun. What ghastly evidence of the inhumanity of man to man! What a spectacular evidence of the awful horrors of war!" In the disastrous assault of June 18, Company C suffered twenty-two men killed and twenty men wounded.¹¹⁶

Why did the First Maine men comply with their suicidal orders, while all the regiments around them kept their heads down? Somehow

all the forces that drove them outweighed the rational fears that would hold them back. They wanted to prove themselves and their regiment better than those around them. They possessed the discipline to follow orders, to entrust their lives to their officers, however unwarranted that trust proved. They feared the shame of cowardice exhibited in the presence of their closest friends. Such men had a bond with their comrades that Joshua Chamberlain expressed as a man saying, "Here is Bill; I will go or stay where he does."¹¹⁷ They believed that the fortifications would fall if attacked with the extra measure of courage that Maine men possessed. Their pride was also reactionary, stimulated by the goads and jeers of the veteran infantry troops that lined the roads on their march from Washington and surrounded them as they prepared to charge.

Afterwards, the *Ellsworth American* reported, "The wounded soldiers are moving home in large numbers. They are to be met with in the cars, on the stage and on the steamboat. We have met with quite a number of Hancock County wounded soldiers with in a few days, on their way home. These veterans are in good spirits, and are earnest to get well and to go back to their patriotic work again. We have never met with the first man that was discouraged."¹¹⁸ After the war, Walt Whitman wrote, "Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors (not the official surface courtesousness of the generals, not the few great battles) of the Secession War; and it is best they should not. The real war will never get in the books."¹¹⁹

Thaddeus Somes

As for Thaddeus Somes, in the spring of 1864, he attended to commerce. Having secured his exemption from the draft, he was free to do as he pleased. In December 1863, he hired a crew and equipped the brig *Adelma* for a year of coastal sailing. He spent most of the year delivering lumber and coal from Calais, Maine to Elizabeth, New Jersey and many ports between.¹²⁰ His log of the voyage reads off the events of each day with a practiced monotony that conveys a lean and orderly rigor conducive to good seamanship and frugal business practice. On Sunday, the first of May 1864, his narrative consisted of the following: "Begins with Foggy weather and light winds from the South East attended with showers of rain middle and latter part the same. So ends this day." The *Adelma* left Lubec Bay at 8:00 a.m. on May 3, bearing a load of lumber

with “thick weather and strong winds” at her back. Twelve hours later, she was anchored off Mount Desert. After stopping at home for a few days, the *Adelma* continued on towards New Haven, Connecticut, and arrived there on May 12, where Thaddeus located his customer and “brought off two scows” of Maine lumber. He sailed on to Elizabeth, New Jersey, passing by the great metropolis that Walt Whitman described after visiting wounded soldiers in hospitals in Washington. Whitman wrote,

It looks so different here in all this mighty city; everything going with a big rush and so gay, as if there was neither war nor hospitals in the land. New York and Brooklyn appear nothing but prosperity and plenty. Everywhere carts and trucks and carriages and vehicles on the go, loaded with goods; express wagons omnibuses, cars, etc.—thousands of ships along the wharves and the piers piled high, where they are loading or unloading the cargoes. . . . Almost everybody well dressed and appearing to have enough.¹²¹

On May 20, Thaddeus picked up 187 tons of coal in Elizabeth and delivered them to Boston Harbor. From Boston, the *Adelma* returned Down East, passing coastal features like the Cape Ann light, Mount Agamenticus, Matinicus Rock, and Mount Desert Rock, arriving on June 5 to anchor off the plaster mills at the mouth of the St. Croix River. The next day, Thaddeus and his crew drifted with the tide to tie up at the docks of Calais, where the *Adelma* picked up another load of lumber.¹²²

In contrast to the trauma endured by Chase Savage, James Parker, and the other young men from Mount Desert, Thaddeus passed the spring of 1864 in the conduct of his business, as if the war were far away. Only the close of the year and the arrival of Christmas seemed to induce Thaddeus to part from his usual terse commentary. As he neared the end of his ship’s log, in a flourishing hand, he wrote, “Mt. Desert, Dec 25th 1864—The first twelve days of Christmas smiles the next twelve months.” And on December 28, he reported, “Mr. Parsons the great revivalist commenced to preach here today.”

Dénouement

After the repulse of the June 18th attack before Petersburg, both armies settled in for a long and bloody siege. With the Union Army in

strong control of both banks of the James River, at least south of Farrar's Island, life on the *Delaware* became less eventful. Chase's letters to Emily grew longer and turned more towards domestic topics, asking about the health of children and relatives, and especially that of his brother Sam. Sam returned from his regiment to Mount Desert Island on sick leave and succumbed to his illness in February 1865. The Union Army finally broke through the defenses of Petersburg and captured the city at dawn on April 3, 1865. By evening of the same day, Richmond fell too, and by April 9, the Confederate commander, Robert E. Lee, surrendered his Army of Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant. Chase was discharged from the Union Navy in June 1865.

The First Maine Heavy Artillery Regiment came home to Maine in June 6, 1865, arriving in Bangor at 3:30 in the morning.¹²³ A memoirist remembered, "Soon the soldiers began to come home, and scenes of joy, (as friend once more met friend), and of the sorrow and anguish of the mother, wife or sweetheart, (when she saw comrades of her loved one arrive, and knew that her heart's love could never come), cannot be told by living pen."¹²⁴ Of the eleven men who departed Mount Desert to join the regiment in 1862, four died in the war and five were wounded. Just two were alive and unwounded; Timothy Mason had transferred to the navy in April 1864, before the regiment left Washington for the front. Only Benjamin T. Atherton served until the end of the war with the regiment and emerged physically unscathed.¹²⁵

James' sister Letitia eventually married a promising Somesville man who had served as a Captain in the 31st regiment, Chauncey Noyes. They moved to Massachusetts to raise a family. James' comrades formed a post of the Grand Army of the Republic, an organization that fought for veterans' rights and benefits, and honored the memory of all who served in the war, and especially their fallen comrades. They named the local GAR post in memory of James M. Parker.

After the war, Thaddeus worked as a businessman, with interests in lumbering and shipbuilding. For sixteen years he was a member of the Town of Mount Desert's board of selectmen, serving for thirteen years as chairman. He also served on the board of assessors and was one of the Overseers of the Poor. For fourteen years, he was the Deputy Collector

of Customs. The newspaper article that announced his resignation from that post said, "Mr. Somes has held the office, except during the Cleveland Administration, for many years and by his kindly manner and genial spirit won a host of friends at Southwest Harbor who will greatly miss him from his accustomed post of duty." He died on January 13, 1913 in Berkeley, California at his daughter's home. His obituary said, "Mr. Somes was a man of sterling character, a generous and devoted husband and father."¹²⁶

Conclusion

None of the young men of Mount Desert could ignore or escape the Civil War. The times demanded that they choose a course. Of the three young men described in this account, Chase, James, and Thaddeus, one served in the navy, one in the army, and one purchased an exemption. The two who survived the war, Chase and Thaddeus, lived long lives and, to outward appearances, found happiness and prosperity in their families and community.

For Chase, the war did not seem to be the fulcrum of his life, as it was for many veterans. After his discharge from the navy, Chase came home, purchased a small schooner and, he later wrote, "traded along the shore." By 1870, Chase and Emily began to take in summer boarders and established Northeast Harbor as a prime destination for "Rusticators." Chase also served as the guide and host for the Champlain Society, the group of young Harvard men who came to study Mount Desert Island, and who in part inspired the founding of Acadia National Park. As he reached the end of his days, Chase penned a short autobiography that points with equal measures of contentment across the several eras of his life, punctuated with sorrows and joys as they are measured out to anyone. He closed the account of his life with the summation, "The voyage of life to us has been peaceful and happy, and now at the age of seventy I wish to say that I do not take any credit to myself, but grant it all to your kind mother. She has been "The Guiding Star."¹²⁷ When Chase died at the age of eighty in 1911, the news was carried on the front page of the local newspaper. His obituary said, "Northeast Harbor lost one of its oldest and most respected citizens."¹²⁸

Thaddeus, the educated young man of property and responsibility, availed himself of draft laws that enabled him to protect his life and fortune and to meet his obligations to family and community. Was there a stigma

attached to the men who avoided military service legally? The evidence is mixed. For the most part, people viewed drafted men with sympathy. A cousin wrote to Chase that it "seems to be a horred thing to carry a man to war against there own free will. It is bad enough to go when one is willing to go."¹²⁹ However, wealthy, young, single men were viewed with resentment if they stayed home while poor married men were forced to serve. Chase wrote, "How strange that those young men of Esqu. Kimballs escaped the draft. I do not wish them any ill but. . . . If I were a young man I don't believe I would stay at home and see fathers go and leave helpless children."¹³⁰ Emily expressed resentment towards a town selectman who, she thought, did not fight hard enough to reduce the town's draft quota. She told Chase, "I think this is a terrible little mean town and our first selectmen is the little small mean John W. Somes. He has bought a sub so he don't care."¹³¹

Yet in the neighboring town of Eden (now Bar Harbor), it was considered a matter of civic pride that the town raised funds to purchase substitutes on behalf of men who were subject to the draft. Eben Hamor wrote in his journal, "At the beginning and during the civil war the citizens of Eden were intensely loyal to the Government, always filling our quota of soldiers called for, either by volunteers or substitutes for drafted men, by raising money, by loan or otherwise, for soldier's bounties, or to buy substitutes, or to provide for soldiers families, promptly, and generally quite unanimously."¹³²

The version of Thaddeus Somes' life story that was passed down to subsequent generations elided his Civil War years and his purchased exemption from the draft. For his granddaughter, the local historian Virginia Somes Sanderson, the conflict and its consequences to the town merit only a few pages in her extensive history of Mount Desert, *The Living Past*.¹³³ To Sanderson, the Civil War was an interlude, a temporary disruption that delayed the arrival of the "Golden Years," the town's heyday as a tourist haven. Partly, she excuses the brevity of her Civil War account on a lack of evidence. She writes, "It is regrettable that records of the Somesville area during and after the Civil War are so meager or unavailable. . . . Unfortunately, there is a disposition on the part of many family members to conceal or dispose of much that could be illuminating, documentary evidence of the part their families played in the life and character of the

past.” But for Thaddeus, reminders of Civil War times must have appeared every day in the sight of widows and orphans who came into his store.

Thaddeus lived a long time after the war. If his span of years was extended because he avoided military service, he used his added time well, earning a reputation for kindness, generosity, and community service. He was beloved by his family. His memory is honored in the form of a picturesque pedestrian bridge that spans Somes Brook in the center of the village of Somesville. The bridge has an ancient look, as though it has been there for centuries, but it was designed only a little over thirty years ago by local architect Roc Caivano, at the request of Virginia Somes Sanderson. The bridge is one of the most photographed places in Maine, visited every year by thousands of tourists, a lovely backdrop for countless prom, engagement, and wedding photographs. Few are aware that the bridge is named the Thaddeus Shepley Somes Memorial Bridge, in memory of Mrs. Sanderson’s beloved grandfather.

As for James M. Parker, one can only speculate about what might have become of him and his comrades had they not fallen on the field before Petersburg. His grave is marked with a fine tall monument in the Brookside Cemetery in Somesville, tucked peacefully near the stream that powered the mills of his childhood. In the years after the war, in the springtime, the men of the GAR would visit all the cemeteries throughout Mount Desert Island and decorate with flowers the grave of every man who fell in the Civil War. At one time, 301 men on Mount Desert Island were members of the James M. Parker Post of the GAR. For seventy years, until 1935, they slowly died away, until only one aged man was left, Dennis J. Haley, and he turned over the post colors and record books to the comparatively young men of the American Legion, who have kept them to this day.¹³⁴

If James’ phrenologist was right about anything, it was in his assessment that the earnest young man would have been successful in anything he stuck to. The memory of James, full of youth and promise, so admired and loved by his friends and family, lives only in the handful of letters he wrote to his sister Letitia.

Today, many of the small cemeteries that dot the landscape of Mount Desert Island contain memorials to the Civil War dead. The graves are marked with a bronze star that reads, “GAR Post 105,” signifying the

James M. Parker post. The gravestones bear inscriptions like, “Fell before Petersburg,” “Fell before Cole [sic] Harbor,” and “Fell at the Battle of the Wilderness.” Their dates show that most of the war dead perished in May and June 1864, in the battles of the Overland Campaign.

A few years after the war, another young veteran, John Wesley Powell, who had lost an arm at the battle of Shiloh, set out to explore the Colorado River, reliving the experience of giving chance a try. He wrote, “We are now ready to start on our way down the Great Unknown. . . . We have an unknown distance yet to run; an unknown river yet to explore. What falls there are, we know not; what rocks beset the channel, we know not; what walls rise over the river, we know not.”¹³⁵ The great torrent of war took up scores of Mount Desert’s young men in its flood. For the young men of Mount Desert, a great war required them to choose a course, and then, in the spring of 1864, it swept them away.

Notes

¹ Walt Whitman, “Beat! Beat! Drums!” in Walter Lowenfels, ed., *Walt Whitman’s Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 1961), 26.

² *Bangor Whig & Courier*, June 27, 1861.

³ Walt Whitman, “The Real War Will Never Get in the Books,” in Lowenfels, ed., *Walt Whitman’s Civil War*, 284.

⁴ Horace H. Shaw and Charles J. House, *The First Maine Heavy Artillery: 1862-1865* (Portland, 1903), 83, accessed December 24, 2012, <http://archive.org/stream/firstmaineheavya00shaw#page/83/mode/1up>.

⁵ James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Title.

⁶ Anne Mazlish, ed., *The Tracy Logbook 1855: A Month in Summer* (Bar Harbor: Acadia Publishing Company, 1997), 58.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸ Lewis Heath essay, “An Island,” ca. 1848. Mount Desert Island Historical Society. Lewis Heath was killed at the battle of Cold Harbor in June 1864.

⁹ James M. Parker (hereafter, “JMP”) to Letitia Parker (hereafter, “LP”), March 19, 1862. Transcription from the original by Richard M. Savage, II, as is all the subsequent personal correspondence referenced, unless otherwise noted. Mount Desert Island Historical Society.

¹⁰ “1860 United States Federal Census,” Ancestry.com, accessed December 22, 2012, http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/view.aspx?dbid=7667&iid=4231249_00617.

¹¹ Virginia Somes Sanderson Notes (undated). Mount Desert Island Historical Society.

¹² Thaddeus S. Somes essay, ca. 1850. Mount Desert Island Historical Society.

¹³ JMP to LP, March 19, 1862.

- ¹⁴ Charles Savage, "Introduction," in *Savage Genealogy*, ed. Rose P. Ruze (Concord: self-published, 2005), 41.
- ¹⁵ Augustus (Chase) Savage, "Memories of a Lifetime," in *Savage Genealogy*, 43.
- ¹⁶ Augustus Chase Savage (hereafter, "ACS") to family, January 7, 1854.
- ¹⁷ George S. Brookes, *These Hundred Years: History of the Hancock Association of Congregational Churches and Ministers, 1825-1925* (Ellsworth, ME: 1926), 13.
- ¹⁸ *The Tribune Almanac and Political Register for 1863* (New York: The Tribune Association, 1863), 50, accessed December 24, 2012, <http://archive.org/stream/tribunealmanacp1863newy#page/50/mode/2up>.
- ¹⁹ *Bangor Whig & Courier*, April 18, 19, 22, & 24, 1861.
- ²⁰ Town of Mount Desert, "Record of 1862, Warrant of Town Meetings," and "Constable's Return on the Foregoing Warrant." Mount Desert Island Historical Society.
- ²¹ Town of Mount Desert, "Record of 1864, Annual meeting;" "Record of 1863, Warrant for the Town Meeting;" and "Record of 1865." Mount Desert Island Historical Society.
- ²² Civil War Database. Mount Desert Island Historical Society.
- ²³ Ibid
- ²⁴ JMP to LP, July 1, 1862.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ JMP to LP, August 10, 1862.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ JMP to LP, October 11, 1863.
- ²⁹ *Ellsworth American*, December 12, 1862.
- ³⁰ *Ellsworth American*, March 13, 1863.
- ³¹ JMP to LP, August 28, 1862.
- ³² Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 423-32.
- ³³ *Ellsworth American*, December 12, 1862.
- ³⁴ JMP to LP, September 27, 1863.
- ³⁵ JMP to LP, November 8, 1863.
- ³⁶ JMP to LP, December 13, 1863.
- ³⁷ JMP to LP, January 16, 1864.
- ³⁸ United States. War Department, Robert Nicholson Scott, et al. *The War of the Rebellion: a compilation of the official records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Volume 36, Part I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), 3; hereafter cited as "OR," followed by series, volume, part, and page numbers.
- ³⁹ JMP to LP, March 27, 1864.
- ⁴⁰ *Ellsworth American*, March 13, 1863.
- ⁴¹ Town of Mount Desert, "Record of 1862, Warrant of Town Meetings," "Record of 1862, Constable's return on the foregoing warrant, July 14, 1862." Mount Desert Island Historical Society.
- ⁴² Town of Mount Desert, "Record of 1864, Annual Meeting Continued, " "Record of 1863, Oaths of Officers." Mount Desert Island Historical Society; Edwin Tobie, *The History of the First Maine Cavalry* (Boston: First Maine Cavalry Association, 1887), 541-626.
- ⁴³ Emily Savage (hereafter "ES") to ACS, March 20, 1865.
- ⁴⁴ ACS to ES, April 29, 1864.

- ⁴⁵ Samuel T. Savage (hereafter "STS") to ACS, January 27, 1864.
- ⁴⁶ "1860 United States Federal Census Record for Harvey Nickerson," Ancestry.com, accessed December 24, 2012. http://search.ancestry.com/iexec?htx=View&r=an&dbid=7667&iid=4231249_00630&fn=Harvey&ln=Nickerson&st=r&ssrc=&pid=44474887.
- ⁴⁷ "Maine, Divorce Records, 1798-1891 about Harvey J. Nickerson," Ancestry.com, accessed December 24, 2012. http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?rank=1&new=1&MSAV=0&msT=1&gss=angs-g&gsfn=harvey&gsln=nickerson&mswpn__ftp=mount+desert&msbdy=1830&uidh=d58&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=12601&recoff=5+7+24&db=MaineDivorce&indiv=1.
- ⁴⁸ "American Lloyd's Register of American and Foreign Shipping, 1864," Mystic Seaport, accessed December 24, 2012. <http://library.mysticseaport.org/initiative/SPSearch.cfm?ID=634145>.
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- ⁵⁰ John L. Hodsdon, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Maine for the Year Ending December 31, 1863* (Augusta: Stevens & Sayward, 1863), 101; Provost Marshal General's Bureau, *Consolidated Lists of Civil War Draft Registration Records* (Washington: U.S. Government, 1865), 445. Ancestry.com, <http://search.ancestry.com/Browse/view.aspx?dbid=1666&path=Maine.5th.Vol+2+of+6%2c+Class+1%2c+K-Z.333&sid=&gskw=Thaddens+S+Somes> (accessed January 25, 2013).
- ⁵¹ STS to ACS, January 27, 1864.
- ⁵² U.S. Steamer *Delaware*, "Ship's Roster," National Archives and Records Administration.
- ⁵³ ACS to ES, March 23, 1864.
- ⁵⁴ Navy Department, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1963), 2: 255.
- ⁵⁵ U.S. Steamer *Delaware*, "Ship's Log," April 1, 1864, National Archives and Records Administration.
- ⁵⁶ ACS to ES, April 21, 1864.
- ⁵⁷ ACS to ES, May 3, 1864.
- ⁵⁸ ACS to ES, April 29, 1864.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ Carl Sandberg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and The War Years* (Pleasantville, NY: Readers Digest, 1954), 277.
- ⁶¹ EA, May 13, 1864.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁶³ *Delaware*, "Ship's Log," May 5, 1864.
- ⁶⁴ ACS to ES, May 9, 1864.
- ⁶⁵ *Delaware*, "Ship's Log," May 11, 1864.
- ⁶⁶ ACS to ES, May 9, 1864; though dated May 9, the letter was continued for several days following.
- ⁶⁷ *Delaware*, "Ship's Log," May 23, 1864.
- ⁶⁸ *Delaware*, "Ship's Log," May 7, 1864.
- ⁶⁹ *Delaware*, "Ship's Log," May 6, May 11, June 1, 1864.
- ⁷⁰ *Delaware*, "Ship's Log," June 7, 1864
- ⁷¹ *Delaware*, "Ship's Log," June 6 and 7, 1864.

- ⁷² ACS to ES, June 4, 1864.
- ⁷³ ASC to ES, June 7, 1864.
- ⁷⁴ ES to ACS, May 23, 1864.
- ⁷⁵ Elijah H. Wasgatt to ES, May 7, 1864.
- ⁷⁶ EA, May 20, 1864.
- ⁷⁷ JMP to LP, May 12, 1864.
- ⁷⁸ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 742-43.
- ⁷⁹ Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (New York: Charles Webster, 1886), 2: 219.
- ⁸⁰ Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 108.
- ⁸¹ EA, May 27, 1864.
- ⁸² Bruce Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox* (New York: Doubleday, 1954), 47; "Unidentified soldier in Union artillery uniform with red piping holding sword," Liljenquist Family Collection of Civil War Photographs, Library of Congress, accessed January 16, 2013, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010648762/>.
- ⁸³ Frank Wilkeson, *Turned Inside Out: Recollections of a Private Soldier in the Army of the Potomac* (New York: Putnam, 1887), 84-87.
- ⁸⁴ Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 109.
- ⁸⁵ EA, June 6, 1864.
- ⁸⁶ Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 111.
- ⁸⁷ ES to ACS, May 23, 1864.
- ⁸⁸ ACS to ES, June 4, 1864.
- ⁸⁹ EA, May 27, 1864.
- ⁹⁰ EA, June 4, 1864.
- ⁹¹ Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 437, 450.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 451.
- ⁹³ EA, May 20, 1864.
- ⁹⁴ ACS to ES, June 4, 1864.
- ⁹⁵ Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 120.
- ⁹⁶ OR, Series I, Volume 40, Part 2, 167.
- ⁹⁷ Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 121.
- ⁹⁸ Joel F. Brown, "The Charge of the Heavy Artillery," *The Maine Bugle*, Campaign 1, Call 1, January 1894, 6.
- ⁹⁹ Alfred Seelye Roe and Charles Nutt, *First Regiment of Heavy Artillery Massachusetts Volunteers: 1861-1865* (Boston: Commonwealth, 1917), 181.
- ¹⁰⁰ Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines, IA: Dyer, 1908), 1253.
- ¹⁰¹ John Talbot, "Combat Trauma in the American Civil War," *History Today* 46 (March 1996): 45.
- ¹⁰² Dyer, *Compendium*, 1253.
- ¹⁰³ Thomas C. Thompson, Seventh New Jersey Infantry, in OR, Series 1, Volume 40, Part I, 418. Accessed December 24, 2012, http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moawar/waro_fulltext.html.
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- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 179.

- ¹⁰⁶ Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 122.
- ¹⁰⁷ Roe and Nutt, *Heavy Artillery Massachusetts*, 181.
- ¹⁰⁸ Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 126.
- ¹⁰⁹ William F. Fox, "The Chances of Being Hit in Battle," *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 36 (May 1888), 94, accessed December 24, 2012, <http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=cent;cc=cent;q1=the%20chances%20of%20being%20hit%20in%20battle;rgn=full%20text;view=image;seq=104;idno=cent0036-1;node=cent0036-1%3A13;page=root;size=100>.
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- ¹¹¹ "Account of the Dedication of The First Maine Heavy Artillery Monument at Petersburg, Virginia on September 14, 1894," The First Maine Heavy Artillery, accessed December 24, 2012, http://www.cwoodcock.com/firstmaine/Account_Dedication.html
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- ¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 141.
- ¹¹⁴ STS to ES, June 26, 1864.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁶ Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 436-38.
- ¹¹⁷ McPherson, *Cause and Comrades*, 6.
- ¹¹⁸ EA, June 24, 1864.
- ¹¹⁹ Whitman, "The Real War Will Never Get in the Books," in *Walt Whitman's Civil War*, 293.
- ¹²⁰ "Seaman's Journal. Journal of a Voyage from Tremont to Baltimore in the Brig Adelpa of Mt. Desert commanded by Captain Thaddeus Somes. Begun Dec 17, 1863 and terminated December 31 1864." Mount Desert Island Historical Society.
- ¹²¹ Whitman, "Dear Son and Comrade, and all my dear comrades in the hospital," in *Walt Whitman's Civil War*, 198-99.
- ¹²² "Seaman's Journal." Mount Desert Island Historical Society.
- ¹²³ Shaw and House, *First Maine Heavy Artillery*, 200.
- ¹²⁴ Ruel H. Stanley and George O. Hall, *Eastern Maine and the Rebellion* (Bangor: R. H. Stanley, 1907), 305.
- ¹²⁵ Civil War Soldier's Database. Mount Desert Island Historical Society. James M. Parker, Samuel Savage, Elijah Wasgatt, and Stillman Smith died during the war. Mark T. Richardson, John A. Rodick, John W. Smith, Bloomfield Richardson, and Charles Southard were wounded.
- ¹²⁶ Virginia Somes Sanderson Notes (undated). Mount Desert Island Historical Society.
- ¹²⁷ Augustus (Chase) Savage, "Memories of a Lifetime," in *Savage Genealogy*, 50.
- ¹²⁸ *Bar Harbor Record*, April 5, 1911.
- ¹²⁹ H.A. Bowden to ACS, April 10, 1864.
- ¹³⁰ ACS to ES, April 6, 1864.
- ¹³¹ ES to ACS, April 6, 1865.
- ¹³² Eben Hamor, Journal, Book No. 1, Strout Family Collection.
- ¹³³ Sanderson, *The Living Past*, 171-79.
- ¹³⁴ Mrs. Seth S. Thornton, *Traditions and Records of Southwest Harbor and Somesville* (Bar Harbor: Acadia Publishing Company, 1988), 102.
- ¹³⁵ John Wesley Powell, *The Exploration of the Colorado River and its Canyons* (New York: Dover, 1961), 247.



THE PLANK ROAD IN WHICH THE FIRST MAINE FORMED AND OUT OF WHICH THE REGIMENT SPRANG TO THE FATAL CHARGE, JUNE 18, 1864.

The regiment formed along the Prince George County Court House Road (sometimes described, as above, as the "plank" road). Afterward, veterans said the worst part was waiting for the attack to begin. From Horace H. Shaw and Charles J. House, *The First Maine Heavy Artillery: 1862-1865* (Portland: 1903), 120-21