

## Hebron and The Civil War

As readers of *Hebron Marlborough Life* know, Hebron Historical Society is writing a pictorial history of our town from the late 1700's through World War II. One of the joys of writing this book has been in meeting with and interviewing the families who have been here for generations.

It was at one of these meetings that a very special friend of mine suddenly said, "I have something that may be of interest to people." With that, she left the room, returning shortly with a document that is truly unique. When I saw the bond, my heart almost stopped with an instant understanding of its significance. I have yet to find anyone who is aware that on January 18, 1864, a Hebron Town Meeting was held, and residents voted to issue Civil War Bonds to "support our troops."

Remembering that the Civil War broke out in 1861 and ended in 1865, the timing of the Hebron Town Meeting to authorize this bond sale is especially intriguing. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln called for a "quota" of men from each town to fight in the war; Hebron was not exempt. By 1863, the war was at a crossroads; in order to decisively defeat the Confederate States of America, more men were needed. That's all well and good, but conscripting men from their farms could also create a crisis, especially in small rural communities. The men were workers, and sometimes the only worker. To send them off to war could mean devastation or impoverishment of local farming families.

Who was going to equip the conscripted men? Who was going to help their families during their absence? These questions were pondered in late 1863 and early 1864, and a notice for a Town Meeting was published on January 11, 1864, Item 3 being: "To see if the Town will raise a tax to defray the expenses of paying the drafted men...to fill the Quota of Said Town under the last call of the President..."

In the hand-written minutes, still on file at the Hebron Town Clerk's Office, Daniel Post, Town Clerk, attested to the following approved vote: "That the Selectmen of the Town be authorized to issue Bonds not to exceed One Hundred dollars each ... payable in Ten and Fifteen years one half each at Six per cent annual interest and not to be sold at less than par Value."

One Hundred Dollars sounds like a small sacrifice to those of us living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; yet, with inflation factored in, \$100 in 1864 would be the equivalent of \$1,404.88 today. Six percent interest is most attractive, especially to us living in 2004! According to the hand-written records, 73 bonds were sold between January 21, 1864 and July 1, 1865. The long-time families all pitched in: the Buells, the Posts, the Ways, the Ellis', the Whites, the Jones, the Hutchinsons, the Porters, the Buttons, the Spragues, the Strongs, the Hortons... even the First Ecclesiastical Society of Andover bought a bond! The 73 bonds, purchased for a total of \$7,300 in 1864, would be the equivalent of \$102,556.34 today.

On February 8, 1864, the townspeople voted that "the Selectmen be and are here authorized to procure a sufficient number of men to fill the Quota under the last call of the President for Two Hundred Thousand Men." On March 26, the Selectmen's minutes noted, "Calvin T. Strickland has enlisted into the service of the United States." Strickland was obviously not the only volunteer, but to meet the quota, others had to be drafted. **On May 18, barely two months after the Selectmen's meeting, young Strickland, age 20, was killed at the Battle of Broadway Landing in Virginia. Orville Robinson was charged to bring the body home for burial at the Gilead Hill Cemetery; he caught meningitis from the troops and also died three days after returning Calvin's body.**

On July 24, a Mr. Turner was “appointed Agent to procure Substitutes or Volunteers to fill the Quota of the Town of Hebron under the last call of the President.” Interestingly, on August 4, 1864, there was yet another Town Meeting in which the first agenda item was “To see if the Town will raise a tax to defray the expenses of filling the Quota under the last call of the President for Five Hundred Thousand Men...” In six short months, according to Hebron records, Lincoln was now asking for an additional 300,000 men to serve in the United States military, in the hope of bringing an end to the bitter battle.

The State of Connecticut required the Registrar of each town to keep records of all eligible men, and if they were not eligible to serve in the United States military, the reason why. In 1863 and in 1864 there were well over 100 men who were eligible (others were exempted for such things as varicose veins, one eye, stiff knee, bad wrist, “short of body and mind” [whatever that means] or “imbecile.”) Whether volunteers or draftees, the men served for a term of three years in a variety of different battalions. In his eloquent handwriting, Daniel Post, who served as also served as the Town Registrar, kept careful records of the names of wives as well as the names and ages of any children. He also noted that those “drafted” were paid \$300. The Selectmen had to attest to the official report to the state, as did the Judge of Probate.

Hebron men and women have answered the call of their leaders in time of war for almost 300 years, and they have always had the support of our community. The proof comes in big ways and small, whether the year is 1784 or 1864 or 1944 or 2004. The story of the War Debt Bonds of 1864 is yet another fascinating moment in Hebron’s history.