

THE CIVIL WAR: CONNECTICUT'S COTTON CONNECTION — A VIRTUAL EXHIBIT

Curated by Beverly L. York & Jamie H. Eves, 2011-12

Introduction

In the summer of 2011, as part of Connecticut's five-year observation of the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War (1861-65), the Windham Textile and History Museum (also known as the Mill Museum of Connecticut) mounted a major exhibit titled *The Civil War: Connecticut's Cotton Connection*. The exhibit remained open to the public until late 2012. The brainchild of Beverly L. York, the Museum's Educational Consultant and a History instructor at Quinebaug Valley Community College, the purpose of the exhibit was to illustrate the strong links between the manufacture of cotton thread and cloth in industrial Connecticut, the production of raw cotton in the South, slavery, and the war. York became the exhibit's lead curator, and Jamie H. Eves, the Museum's Collections Manager and Executive Director and a History instructor at Eastern Connecticut State University, joined her as a research and curatorial assistant.



The exhibit divided the topic into four main parts: the Cotton Connection (the rise of King Cotton and the emergence of Willimantic, CT, as a cotton manufacturing center in the early 1800s), Slavery and Antislavery in Connecticut (with a focus on the Willimantic area), Willimantic Area Soldiers, and the Connecticut Home Front. Our hypothesis was that, because Willimantic and other New England cotton mill towns were dependent on slave-picked cotton for their livelihoods, the residents of those communities may have been more sympathetic than other New Englanders to slavery and the South. While quite a bit of research had already been done on the first and fourth topics, we quickly realized that there was a scarcity of information on the second and third sections, forcing us to carry out our own research. Much of that research went into the exhibit itself, but — because of space limitations — much valuable information ended up being left “on the cutting room floor.”

This article was originally written as a “companion” to the exhibit — to present in booklet form much of the research on the history of slavery and antislavery in the Willimantic area, and on the Willimantic-area soldiers who fought in the war. There remains much more research that could — and should — be done. But what we did find out surprised us. We discovered that slavery had a deeper history in the area than we had thought. But we also discovered that, contrary to our expectations, the men and women who lived in antebellum (pre-war) Willimantic and Connecticut’s other cotton mill towns had been more likely, not less, to oppose slavery than people living in agricultural communities or metal and machine manufacturing centers. We hope that this web article, like the exhibit itself, will inspire further research on the history of Northern cotton mill cities roles in the Cotton Kingdom and the Civil War.

King Cotton and the Rise of Willimantic, CT, a Cotton Mill Town

1. The Cotton Kingdom. In 1853 Frederick Law Olmsted, a 31-year-old journalist from Hartford, Connecticut, published *The Cotton Kingdom*, an account of his travels throughout the Southern United States. A best seller, *The Cotton Kingdom* made clear just how much the American South depended on cotton. While cotton had been a relatively unimportant crop in the South in the colonial period, shortly after the American Revolution two events combined to make it absolutely central to Southern life. First, in 1793 Samuel Slater (a transplanted English management trainee) and Moses Brown (a Rhode Island shipper and businessman) opened the first modern textile mill in the United States in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, launching the American Industrial Revolution. Second, that very same year Eli Whitney (a teacher educated at Yale) and Catherine Greene (a Rhode Island widow who owned a plantation in Georgia) co-

invented the cotton gin, a simple, inexpensive machine that quickly and efficiently separated the fibers of the cotton plant from the sticky seeds, making cotton a profitable crop. The South was transformed. Hundreds of thousands of acres were cleared and planted in cotton. Millions of enslaved African Americans were put to work planting, tending, picking, and ginning cotton. Slavery, which many thought might gradually disappear, instead expanded as, in the largest forced migration in American history, tens of thousands of slaves were “sold south” from the tobacco-growing states of Virginia, Maryland, and Kentucky to the “cotton belt” of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, coastal Texas, and parts of Arkansas and Tennessee. By 1850 there were four million slaves in the South, as compared to only a half million free blacks in the entire United States. Many Southerners could not imagine how their economy and society could function without them.



What is less understood today is that cotton was “king” in New England as well as in the South. Beginning with Slater’s Mill (which at first produced woolens, but switched to cotton as raw cotton became more available), cotton mills by the scores sprang up along the rivers of Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, where the combination of abundant rainfall and hilly topography meant plenty of waterpower — and where shippers and merchants had sufficient surplus capital to invest in the risky new venture. By 1830, not only had raw cotton surpassed wheat as America’s most important agricultural export, but cotton products had become the country’s leading manufactured export, as well. If King Cotton led to more slavery in the South, in New England it led to the expansion of what nineteenth-century people called “free labor,” or wage work. In both regions, increasingly larger proportions of the population worked for someone else, as opposed to being self-sufficient farmers or craftspeople. But unlike the South, which remained rural, in New England King Cotton led to rapid urbanization, with hundreds of growing, chuffing, cotton mill cities, small and large, scattered across

the landscape. Cotton lay at the heart of the economies, societies, and cultures of both regions.

2. Cotton Created Willimantic, Connecticut. Located in a narrow, rocky ravine in the western part of the old colonial town of Windham in northeastern Connecticut, Willimantic was sparsely populated as late as 1820, a “scrub oak forest” that held only a handful of hardscrabble farms and preindustrial custom mills, a tavern, and two turnpikes. But the Willimantic River, winding through a range of steep, flinty hills, dropped more than 90 feet in less than a mile, creating plenty of potential waterpower. First a turnpike, and after 1849 a railroad, connected the gorge to the port city of Norwich, only 15 miles away.

So, starting in the 1820s, a series of new, industrial cotton mills located at the gorge, towering edifices of granite surrounded by rows of company houses. Financed by capital from Providence, Hartford, and Boston, the mills expanded and grew. By the time of the Civil War in 1861, they had become the nuclei of a growing city of about 4,000 inhabitants — a home to mill workers, managers, and owners, and to merchants, engineers, shop clerks, lawyers, doctors, teamsters, carpenters, seamstresses, and others who, either directly or indirectly, depended on cotton for their livelihoods.

Slavery in Antebellum Willimantic

3. Slavery in Connecticut. Antebellum (pre-war) Willimantic was sharply divided on the issue of slavery. For one thing, slavery had a long history in Connecticut, which made it difficult to challenge. African slaves arrived in Connecticut in 1639, only a few years after the earliest English colonists, and slavery had remained largely intact for almost a century and a half, making it seem to many people like the natural order of things. Quite a few colonial Connecticut families owned slaves, although generally in small numbers. About one quarter of all colonial Connecticut ministers, lawyers, town officials, and farmers owned slaves. By the time of the Revolution in the late 1700s, Connecticut had more slaves than all the other New England colonies combined. Like indentured servants and apprentices, most enslaved people lived, worked, and ate alongside the family that owned them. Most male slaves were farm hands, skilled at working the land and caring for livestock. The majority of the female slaves performed domestic work, including child care, food production, washing and cleaning. Slaves also

worked in the seaports, as laborers and sailors. They sometimes attended Congregational, Episcopal, or other religious meetings, and some owners felt obligated to Christianize them. They sometimes attended Congregational, Episcopal, or other religious meetings, and some owners felt obligated to Christianize them.

After the Revolution, slavery in Connecticut declined gradually. In 1774, Connecticut had about 5,000 slaves, but almost half became free over the next two decades. The first U. S. Census, in 1790, found 2,648 slaves in Connecticut — still more than half of the slaves living in New England. Several dozen enslaved people lived in and around Windham and Willimantic. In 1790, 29 slaves lived in Windham, 51 in next-door Lebanon, 19 in Hebron, 10 in Brooklyn, seven in Coventry, seven in Ashford, five in Mansfield, and one each in Hampton and Willington. In 1784, influenced by the Revolution, the legislature provided for the gradual abolition of slavery in Connecticut, declaring that all slaves born after March 1 of that year were to be freed on their 25th birthdays. This kind of gradual abolition was agonizingly slow, however, and slavery did not completely end in Connecticut until 1848, only 13 years before the Civil War. When antislavery activity began to grow in Willimantic in the 1830s, it was not just a reaction to slavery in the far-away South, but occurred in a state where slavery still existed.

4. Not Surprisingly, the People of Willimantic Had Decidedly Mixed Feelings About Slavery and Abolition. On the one hand, almost nobody wanted to see slavery in Connecticut. As New Englanders, they were proud of their “free” (i.e., wage) labor system, which they regarded as more modern and economically advanced than slavery, indentured servitude, and other forms of bound labor. The city’s small African American minority, of course, opposed slavery in any form. But many whites, while opposing slavery in Connecticut, feared that challenging it in the South might create an irreparable breach between North and South, splinter the two national parties, the Democrats and Whigs, and perhaps result in secession or even civil war.

There were also economic reasons for people in Willimantic to tolerate slavery in the South. Southern slaves planted, tended, and harvested most of the cotton that Willimantic’s busy mills manufactured into thread and cloth. Many feared that abolishing slavery nationwide might drive up the price of cotton (by increasing the cost of labor) and thereby imperil their own jobs and profits. Moreover, the majority of the white residents of Willimantic would have shared the insidious racial prejudice against African Americans that was so prevalent at the time. As Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jennifer Frank of the *Hartford Courant* point out in their 2005 book, *Complicity*,

Connecticutters were as complicit in American slavery as anyone else in the United States. A lot of them were willing to tolerate it, just so long as it remained in the South, safely out of sight.

Confronting Slavery

5. Adam Jackson, an Eastern Connecticut Slave. Adam Jackson was the third generation of his family to be enslaved. He lived and worked in colonial New London, a bustling eastern Connecticut seaport. Jackson's grandmother Maria (probably brought as a slave from the West Indies) and father John Jackson (Maria's son) arrived in New London in the late 1680s on a West Indian trade ship. Adam was born in Connecticut. He became the slave of Joshua Hempstead (1678-1758), a prosperous New London farmer, shipwright, surveyor, and stonecutter. Hempstead was a community leader, holding multiple public offices, including justice of the peace, judge of probate, member of the colonial assembly, and selectman. After his wife died in childbirth, Hempstead raised nine children as a single parent. Like most New England slave holders, he owned one or two slaves, to help with the farming and housework. When Adam Jackson arrived at the Hempstead house in 1727, the house held nine people, all sharing two chambers, a garret (attic space), and a kitchen. Adam Jackson and Joshua Hempstead worked closely together, performing numerous tasks that are well documented in Hempstead's famous 47-year diary. Jackson is mentioned on at least 50 pages of the diary.

Orrin Robinson: Abolitionist and Connecticut's Thoreau (link)

John Brown: *Willimantic Conductor on the Underground Railroad (link)*

John Ashbel Conant: *Mill Worker, Abolitionist, Radical Idealist (link)*



Cotton, Slavery, and Politics in 1850s Connecticut

6. A Political Realignment. Political divisions and discord in the United States, Connecticut, and Willimantic deepened in the 1850s, a period that historians have characterized as “the Crisis of Union.” Nationally, the Missouri Compromise was overturned and replaced by the Compromise of 1850, which no one liked. The Fugitive Slave Act infuriated New Englanders, while the addition of California as a free state (and the abolition of the slave trade in Washington, D. C.) disturbed Southerners. The Kansas-Nebraska Act led to violent conflict on the Great Plains between armed bands of pro- and antislavery settlers, a circumstance known as “Bleeding Kansas.” The Dred Scott decision, proclaimed by a pro-slavery Supreme Court, seemed to many New Englanders to open the door to the expansion of slavery into the West and North. Bleeding Kansas and the John Brown raid on Harper’s Ferry, VA, confirmed the beliefs of many that activists on the other side were out to kill them. The old pro-business Whig Party collapsed under the strain of sectional discord, to be replaced by the regional Republican Party, which existed only in the North. The old pro-farmer Democratic Party survived the turmoil, but only by temporarily splitting in two, with the Southern wing vociferously defending slavery and the Northern wing desperately looking for some sort compromise that would resolve the conflict and save the Union.

Connecticut and Willimantic, too, were embroiled in the profound political conflict. The former two-party system of pro-farmer Democrats and pro-business Whigs

convulsed, just as it did nationwide. In the early part of the decade, a new Free Soil Party arose on a platform of opposition to slavery. In 1854 the Free Soilers stunned observers by capturing a number of seats in the Connecticut legislature. Then, two years later, another new party appeared on the scene, the American Party, an anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant group also called the Know Nothings. The Know Nothings were even more successful than the Free Soilers; absorbing most of the state's Free Soilers and Whigs, they actually won a majority in the legislature, as well as the governorship. But then they, too, fell apart, riven by internal discord, to be replaced by the end of the decade by the rising new Republican Party, a not-entirely-congenial combination of old pro-business Whigs, virulently nativist Know Nothings, anti-slavery Free Soilers, and renegade Democrats who bolted their old party because it still hoped to compromise on the issue of slavery. The Republicans became Connecticut's new majority, supplanting the antebellum Democrats and winning control of the legislature and governorship for years to come.

7. Connecticut's Cotton Mill Towns as Centers of Anti-Slavery Activity. We approached our research on the 1850s with a hypothesis. Because Connecticut's cotton industry relied on Southern, slave-picked cotton for its economic lifeblood, we expected that voters in cotton-mill towns would have been, overall, more likely than voters in non-cotton-mill towns to vote Democratic (the Democrats were the most strongly antiabolitionist of the state's several political parties) and the least likely to vote Free Soil or Republican. To test this hypothesis, we constructed an experiment. We used data from the 1850 federal manufacturing census to divide Connecticut into manufacturing towns (those with several large mills, based on the number of employees), farm towns, and nonmanufacturing commercial towns. Then we further divided the manufacturing towns into cotton towns, other textile towns, foundry and metal-goods towns, and towns that had other manufactories, such as rubber mills or quarries. We discovered that the cotton mill towns were largely clustered in the eastern part of the state, especially the northeast. The foundry and metal-goods towns were clustered in the west, in the Naugatuck River valley. Then we examined voting patterns for the lower house of the state legislature (where every town had a least one representative, and the larger ones had two) in the 1850s, especially the 1854 state election (the high tide of the Free Soil Party) and the 1860 election (when the Republicans came to power).

What we found surprised us. Rather than lean Democratic, as we had expected, the cotton mill towns were actually statistically more likely than other towns to vote Free Soil or Republican. The stronghold of the Free Soil Party in 1854 was Windham County, in the northeastern part of the state, where most of the cotton mills were located. The entire eastern half of the state was the Republican stronghold in 1860. Of course, not all Republican voters were antislavery, as we have seen, but the party was more closely

associated with antislavery than the rival Democrats. The Democrats, for their part, were strongest in the foundry and metal-goods manufacturing towns. In 1860, the two parties split the farm towns fairly evenly, the Democrats won the foundry towns, while the Republicans won both the textile mill towns and the commercial port towns. We're not sure why the cotton mill towns so often voted against their own economic interests. There are several possible explanations. Perhaps the idea of free labor, so central to industrializing New England, had taken such firm hold that it provided a new voting ideology. Perhaps, as some English historians have suggested about similar patterns in Britain, the cotton mill workers sympathized with the slaves as fellow members of an exploited class. More research needs to be done to determine the true cause.

Among the Good and the True: Willimantic Area Soldiers

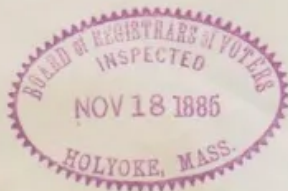
8. Many Willimantic Men Served in the Union Army. Thousands of men from eastern Connecticut – including hundreds from the Willimantic area – joined the Union Army during the Civil War. Most were volunteers. They enlisted for a variety of reasons: to save the Union, to preserve democracy, to halt the spread of slavery, to abolish slavery, for personal glory, for soldiers' pay, because it was their duty, and for many other reasons. Unlike most American wars (but similar to the Revolutionary War and World War II), few of these men were professional soldiers. Many were older than 25, married, and fathers. Almost all had civilian jobs.

The dozens of Civil War gravestones we found in four Willimantic area cemeteries attest to the large number of men who served: the Windham Center Cemetery, the Old Willimantic Cemetery, the North Windham Cemetery, and St. Joseph's Catholic Cemetery (where many of the Irish immigrant soldiers were buried). Most of the stones are official U. S. Armed Forces veteran's markers – plain marble stones with smooth surfaces, block letters, and rounded tops.

9. Corporal William Smith of Willimantic: Irish Immigrant and Prisoner of War. On August 19, 1861, just four months after the fall of Fort Sumter and less than a month after the first Battle of Bull Run, at Willimantic, CT, William Smith, an 18-year-old cotton-mill worker born in Ireland, joined Company H of the Seventh Regiment of the Connecticut Volunteer Infantry as a private. He didn't have to do so. He was a volunteer, not a draftee. Indeed, he wasn't even an American citizen. Smith served for the duration, reenlisting on January 1, 1864. He was promoted to corporal on May 16, 1864, and was honorably discharged on June 19, 1865, almost four years after joining up.

Considering all that he endured, it was a miracle that he survived. Not only did his unit suffer appallingly high casualties, Smith would be captured and imprisoned in the notorious Andersonville prison. He would serve in two important campaigns: the liberation of the Sea Islands and the Wilderness Campaign.

That we know much of anything at all about Corporal Smith is itself also pretty much of a miracle. He was an ordinary man, the kind who didn't publish memoirs, hold political office, or inspire biographies. He was literate, but didn't write much. If he wrote any wartime letters home to his girlfriend, Maggie, none have survived. But in the fall of 2010, the Windham Textile and History Museum received a donation of two battered cardboard boxes stuffed with tattered, crumpled family papers, rescued from a trash heap. As it turned out, most the papers had belonged to the Smith family of Willimantic, descendants of William Smith. Among the items saved were the forms and letters that William Smith had submitted to the federal government in the late 1890s when, near death, he applied for a pension as an invalid veteran unable to work because of injuries sustained during the war. Combined with research we did in United States Census records, Willimantic street directories, and St. Joseph Cemetery, these papers recount the remarkable story of an immigrant who risked everything for his adopted country.



At a Superior Court holden at Brooklyn, in and for the County of Windham, in the State of Connecticut, on the *fourth* Tuesday of *August* in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy *two*

PRESENT—Hon *La Fayette S Foster* JUDGE.

Be it Remembered, That on the *11th* day of *October* in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy *two*

William Smith

of *Windham* in said County of Windham, appeared in open Court, (the said Court being a Court of Record, having common Law jurisdiction, and a Clerk and Seal,) and applied to be admitted to become a citizen of the United States. And the said *William Smith* then proved to the satisfaction of the court that he came to the United States while he was a minor under the age of eighteen years; that it was then, ever since has been, and still is, bona fide his intention to become a citizen of the United States, and to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to every Foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatever.

And it appearing to the satisfaction of the Court that the said *William Smith* has resided within the United States five years at least, and in the State of Connecticut one year at least, and that during said five years he has behaved as a man of good moral character, attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the same.

And the said *William Smith* having declared on oath that he would support the CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, and that he did absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any Foreign Prince, Potentate, State, or Sovereignty, whatever, and particularly to *Victoria Queen* of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, of whom he was before a subject.

It was, therefore, considered by the Court, that *William Smith* be, and he was accordingly admitted to become a CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES.

I, *Edward S Lundall* State of Connecticut, County of Windham, ss.
Clerk of the Superior Court for said
County of Windham, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a

10. Although Not a Citizen, Smith Volunteered to Fight for the Union. Like many cotton workers, Smith was an immigrant, born in 1843 in Tipperary, Ireland. In some of the census records, he is recorded as having been born in New York — perhaps that meant that he had lived in New York before coming to Willimantic — but in other census reports and in his official paperwork, he is shown to have been born in Ireland. Indeed, among the papers that survived were his citizenship papers; in 1872, more than a decade after joining the Union army, Smith applied for, and was granted, U. S. citizenship. They declare that he was born in Ireland, a subject of Queen Victoria. (Thus Smith went from being a subject of a monarch to a citizen of a republic.) Little is known of Smith's early life, of why he came to America, or even why he was in Willimantic in 1861. He does not appear in the city's 1860 federal census, and his parents do not seem to have ever lived there. However, his future wife, Maggie Bradshaw, also an Irish immigrant, did live in Willimantic in 1860, in a rented company row house along with her parents, who worked for the Willimantic Linen Company. Perhaps Smith was in Willimantic courting Maggie when he decided to join up.

11. The Seventh CVI is organized. From Willimantic, Smith was sent to New Haven, where his regiment was officially organized. Like other regiments, the Seventh had 1,000 men divided into 10 companies of about 100 each. It was commanded by Colonel (later Major General) Alfred Terry of New Haven, a 34-year-old lawyer, Republican Party activist, and clerk of the New Haven County court who had helped raise and organize the regiment, after having fought earlier at First Bull Run. Terry remained in the army after the war, serving as military governor of the Dakota Territory. He negotiated the historically significant 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie with the Lakota (the treaty established the pattern for future U. S. relations with the western tribes), led the relief column that discovered Custer's body after the Little Big Horn, crossed into Canada to negotiate with Sitting Bull, fought Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce, and — in a later posting in Georgia — denounced the Ku Klux Klan. Terry died in New Haven in 1890. Second in command of the Seventh was Lt. Col. Joseph Roswell Hawley, a lawyer, ardent antislavery activist, and Free Soil

and Republican Party politician from Hartford who, like Terry, had fought earlier at Bull Run. After the war, Hawley reentered politics and was elected governor of Connecticut and later United States Senator. He would also own and edit the *Hartford Courant*. The Seventh featured volunteers from throughout Connecticut, including Redding, Ridgefield, and Southington, as well as Willimantic, New Haven, and Hartford.

Smith's own Company H was comprised mostly of men from northeastern Connecticut. Its captain, John Dennis, was from Norwich, as were the two lieutenants, Theodore Burdick and Gorham Dennis. Two of the five sergeants were from Willimantic or Windham, Charles Wood and Charles Ripley. Other men from Willimantic or Windham included Corporal Charles Hooks and Privates David Cronan, Micheal Flynn, Frank Gallagher, Edmund Harvey, Benjamin Sanford, Jerome Snow, and John Walker. Smith was not the only Willimantic Irishman in the company.

12. The Sea Island Campaign. Tucked among the Smith family papers we found a half-size sheet of note paper from the office of Frank Fenton, the Windham Town Clerk, which contained a handwritten list of the "Engagements of the 7th Regiment C. V. I." Perhaps Fenton or one his clerks had put the list together for Smith in the 1890s when he was applying for his pension, to aid his memory. The list is long, and corresponds to historical accounts of the regiment. The Connecticut Seventh — and presumably Smith along with it — first saw action in April of 1862, as part of the siege on Fort Pulaski, a Confederate stronghold in the Georgia Sea Islands — ironically, the source of some of the finest cotton that, before the war, had been processed into thread at the Willimantic mills where Smith had worked. After the fall of Fort Pulaski, the Seventh moved up the coast to the South Carolina Sea Islands, seeing combat at James Island in June and Porotaligo in October. The next year, in July of 1863, the Seventh fought at Morris Island, SC, before joining the deadly siege of Fort Wagner, SC, in October — best known as the fort assaulted by the 54th Massachusetts Regiment in the film *Glory*. The Union victories in the Sea Islands were important to the outcome of the war. The Union Navy used the Sea Islands as a key base in maintaining its blockade of the Confederacy, denying the South much-needed supplies and aid from overseas. The Seventh remained in the Deep South until early 1864, participating in the Battle of Olustee in Florida in February; just a few weeks earlier, Smith had reenlisted for the duration of the war.

1623

GRAND ARMY MEMORIAL RECORD BLANK
—FOR—
POST HISTORIAN

The Comrade is requested to fill this blank, sign and return it to the Post Historian, at next Post meeting. Great care and mathematical accuracy must be observed in the matter of NAMES, DATES, LOCALITIES and EVENTS.

I, New Smith (FULL NAME), was born _____ (DATE), 18 43 in Ireland (PLACE),
(COUNTY) _____ (STATE) _____ (WAS COMMISSIONED OR ENLISTED)
Tappan (RANK) _____ (OR BATTERY) _____ I _____
as Private (DATE) _____ Co. A, 7th Reg't _____ Com. Infy. Vol. (STATE VOL. REG., ARMY OR NAVY)
on August 19th (DATE) _____, 1861, at Wendham, Mass. (PLACE)
(GIVE RANK AND DATE OF COMMISSION)
for 3 years. I held the following offices: Re-enlisted Veteran Aug. 1st 1864,
promoted Corporal May 16th 1864 (DATE) _____ (PLACE)
was honorably discharged June 19th (DATE) _____, 1865, at _____ (PLACE)
(RE-ENLISTED OR WAS TRANSFERRED TO)
by reason of _____ I _____
I was finally discharged _____, 186____, at _____
by reason of _____ I was engaged in _____ battles
and skirmishes, as follows: _____
I was wounded _____ (OR DISABLED) _____ (DATE) _____, 186____, at _____ (PLACE)
(NATURE OF WOUND AND WHERE)
by _____
I was confined in the following hospitals: _____ (NAME) _____ (DATE)
I was taken prisoner June 2d (DATE) _____, 1864, at Bermuda Hundred Va. (PLACE)
(BY WHOM AND HOW)
by _____ (NAME OF PRISON) _____ (DATE) _____ (DATE)
I was confined in Andersonville from _____, 186____, to _____
186____; _____
I _____ (ESCAPED, WAS EXCHANGED OR PAROLED) _____ (DATE) _____

13. The Wilderness Campaign, Andersonville, and Home. In the Spring of 1864 the Seventh was ordered north to Virginia to participate in the bloody Wilderness Campaign, the determined Union assault on the Confederate strongholds around Richmond. As part of the move, Smith was promoted to corporal. The Seventh saw action at Chester Station, VA, in May, and then fought three engagements at Bermuda

Hundred. For Smith, the fighting at Bermuda Hundred was a turning point. On June 2 he was taken prisoner by Confederate forces and confined in the notorious Andersonville prison for nearly nine months, until he was paroled on February 28, 1865. Smith rejoined his old regiment, but by then, the fighting was over for the Seventh. The regiment saw no more combat. Smith was honorably discharged that summer, when the war finally ended. He was twenty-two.

What impact did the war have on William Smith? On the one hand, he was lucky to be alive. He survived seven battles and a nine-month incarceration at Andersonville. During the war, the Seventh had had 11 officers and 157 enlisted men killed or mortally wounded, and another four officers and 192 enlisted men to disease, for a 36.4% casualty rate. The experience must have left scars, both physical and emotional. In 1890 Congress voted to provide pensions for disabled veterans, and in 1897 Smith applied, citing a “partial inability to earn a support by manual labor.” In 1899 his application was granted, when the Bureau of Pensions declared him an invalid.



14. After the War. Smith returned to Willimantic and married Maggie Bradshaw. He took a job at the Willimantic Linen Company. His and Maggie’s first child, a daughter

named Mary, was born in 1866. A son, William C., arrived in 1869. In 1872, Smith became a U. S. citizen. For a time, the family lived with Maggie's parents. Then, sometime after 1870, Maggie died. Smith never remarried. The 1880 census found him and his children living in a tenement on Schoolhouse Hill. Later, when his son was grown, Smith moved in with him. Smith died in 1899, at the age of 54.

Smith's son, William C. Smith, grew up to become a barber with a shop of his own, an amateur actor (including roles in plays staged to raise money for the G. A. R., the Grand Army of the Republic, an association of Civil War veterans), a member of Catholic and Irish-American organizations, and later an overseer at the thread mill. Smith's daughter, Mary Ann, married into the upwardly mobile Meehan family. Both remained in Willimantic. Two of Smith's granddaughters attended the Willimantic Normal School and became teachers. His great-grandson would own and operate the Lake Compounce amusement park in Southington, CT.

Casualties for Company H, 7th Regiment, C.V.I.

Captain Theodore Burdick, Norwich, killed
Lieutenant Charles A. Wood, Windham, killed
Sergeant Charles H. Ripley, Windham, killed
Corporal Henry A. Bottomly, Norwich, died
Corporal Charles H. Hooks, Windham, disabled
Musician Lewis Bradford, Sprague, died
Wagoner Francis Marsh, Norwich, disabled
Private Jared A. Abell, Bozrah, killed
Private Joseph A. Brown, Eastford, died of wounds
Private Theodore D. Bowers, Willington, died
Private Lorenzo S. Doolittle, New Haven, died

Private Patrick Donlan, Middletown, disabled

Private William S. English, New Haven, killed

Private Robert Erwin, Sprague, disabled

Private Michael Flynn, Windham, disabled

Private Allen Fry, Griswold, died

Private William J. Holland, Mansfield, disabled

Private Joab Jeffrey, New London, died

Private Lewis O. Palmer, Norwich, invalid

Private Arthur D. Pitcher, Norwich, disabled

Private Horace C. Rogers, Norwich, disabled

Private Benjamin Sanford, Windham, disabled

Private George Shay, Plainfield, disabled

Private George W. Smith, Norwich, disabled

Private Amos W. Taylor, Sprague, disabled

Private Perry Yerrington, Norwich, invalid

15. Captain Francis S. Long of Willimantic: Killed in Action. Father James and son Francis ("Frank") Long – 46 and 22 years old the year the war began – both joined the Union Army. James was a millworker and an immigrant; he had been born in England c. 1813, moved to Rhode Island (probably as a child), married Jane, an immigrant from Scotland, c. 1834, moved to Willimantic c. 1840, and worked as an operative in one of the city's cotton mills. Frank grew up in Willimantic and worked as a mechanic, probably in the same mill. They joined different regiments, James the 18th and Frank the 21st. James survived. Frank did not. Captain Francis S. Long died in combat on July 30, 1864, at Petersburg, VA. The Willimantic chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic – an organization of Union Civil War veterans – was named after him.

Frank Long enlisted in the 21st Regiment, Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, on August 2,

1862, a little more than a year after the war had begun and a year after William Smith joined the Seventh. Unlike Smith, Long entered the Army as an officer, appointed first lieutenant of Company D, which was comprised almost entirely of men from the Willimantic area. Company D's first captain was Charles Southworth of Mansfield, who resigned his commission only a few months later, in November of 1862. Long, who as first lieutenant was second in command, was not immediately promoted, however; he became captain a year later, on July 31, 1863, when several other officers in the division were also promoted. Nevertheless, he seems to have been in command of the company after Southworth's resignation. Long would have known many, if not most, of the men in Company D, even before it was formed. They were his neighbors. Most of the officers were from Mansfield, the town just north of Willimantic. One of the sergeants was David Conant, a silk worker and the brother of John A. Conant, the conductor on the Underground Railroad who we met earlier.



The 21st participated in the occupation of Richmond, VA, and Columbia, SC, before being mustered out in June of 1865. The 21st suffered fewer casualties than the Seventh: five officers and 55 enlisted men killed and mortally wounded, and one officer and 114 enlisted men felled by disease, for a 17.5% casualty rate — about half of the casualty rate of the Seventh. But several of the 21st's casualties were from the Willimantic area. Frank Long was killed in action at Petersburg in July of 1864. Private Henry W. Thorne of Mansfield was killed in action near Drury's Bluff, VA, in May, 1864.

16. The 21st CVI. The 21st Connecticut was organized at Norwich in early September, 1862. It quickly traveled to Washington to join the Army of the Potomac. Almost immediately, the regiment found itself in the thick of things, taking part in the Battle of Fredericksburg in December, 1862, and the Mud March in January, 1863. In February, the 21st was moved to coastal Virginia, where it remained until February, 1864, when it was attached to Grant's command in the bloody Wilderness Campaign — thus joining the Seventh in the all-out push to defeat Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. The 21st saw action at Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Richmond, Bermuda Hundred (where the Seventh also fought, and where William Smith was taken prisoner), New Market Heights, and Fair Oaks.



Casualties for Company D, 21st Regiment, C.V.I.

Captain Francis S. Long, Windham, killed
Corporal John D. Gaylord, Ashford, disabled
Corporal Dwight P. Peck, Chaplin, died
Private John M. Brackett, Willington, died
Private Theodore F. Bennett, Mansfield, killed
Private George H. Crosby, Mansfield, died
Private Patrick Dunn, Windham, invalid
Private George Edgerton, Ashford, died

Private William Hulse, Mansfield, died
Private Eli Jackson, Lisbon, invalid
Private Elijah F. Owen, Ashford, died
Private William Robinson, Hampton, died
Private Henry W. Thorne, Mansfield, killed
Private Frank Tucker, Franklin, died
Private Whiting S. Wyllys, Mansfield, died
Private Jonathan Weeks, Eastford, disabled

17. The 29th CVI (Colored). In 1863, following the Emancipation Proclamation, Congress agreed to permit African Americans to serve in the Union Army and Navy, although in segregated, all-black regiments led by white officers. Altogether, during the war more than 178,000 black men – a combination of free blacks and freed slaves, Northerners and Southerners – volunteered to fight for the Union (no black soldiers were drafted; all were volunteers) in 175 so-called “colored” regiments. Generally viewing the war as a crusade to end slavery, Northern black men volunteered in even greater proportions than Northern whites, and by the end of the war made up about

10% of the Union forces. The “colored” regiments suffered 2,751 combat casualties and 68,178 losses from all causes.

“On the 19th of November, 1863, the War Department authorized the Governor of Connecticut to raise a regiment to be designated as the “Twenty-ninth Regiment Connecticut Volunteers” (colored), to serve three years, or during the war; on the 23rd of November, in General Orders No. 17, the work of recruiting this regiment was officially begun at Hartford. This regiment made a splendid reputation, losing nineteen enlisted men killed, two officers wounded, one hundred and twenty-one enlisted men wounded, one enlisted man missing, making total casualties one hundred and forty-three.”

— George W. Williams, *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion* (1888)

18. Corporal Caesar Hall of Hampton. One of the African American men who volunteered for service in the 29th Connecticut was Caesar Hall, Jr., a free black farm laborer from Hampton, Connecticut. In 1863 Hall was 34 years old, a husband, and a father of four. Like his father, Caesar Hall, Sr., he had been born in Connecticut. Caesar Hall, Jr., grew up in Hampton. He could read and write. According to the 1860 U. S. Census, his wife Julia was a stay-at-home mother and housewife, and his eldest child Nancy attended local schools. In 1864 Hall earned a promotion to Corporal when, on guard duty, he stopped a soldier from one of the all-white regiments from deserting. After the war, Hall returned to his family in Hampton and continued to work as a farm laborer. He died in 1896 and is buried in the Old Willimantic Cemetery.

SAMUEL BOWERS, of New-York, a volunteer at the camp on Grapevine Point, attempted to desert on Friday night, by running the guard. CAESAR HALL, of Co. A [Hall was actually in Co. H], Twenty-ninth Connecticut Volunteers, (colored) on guard at the time, ordered him to halt, when BOWERS threw snuff in his eyes. HALL pursued and closed with the runaway; he bayoneted him badly through the arm, broke his gunstock over his head, and brought him back to camp. BOWERS was sent to the hospital, and will probably recover. HALL was, this morning, promoted to be corporal.

— *New York Times*, 3 Jan. 1864

*The Following African American Men from the Windham, Connecticut, Area
Joined the 29th Connecticut Volunteers, One of 175 All-Black Regiments that
Fought for the Union During the Civil War*

Company B

William Buell, musician, Columbia (deserted)

William Street, musician, Scotland

Pvt. William Burton, Scotland

Pvt. William Burris, Franklin

Pvt. William Carpenter, Franklin

Pvt. Richard Campbell, Scotland

Pvt. Charles Kane, Scotland

Pvt. Ganalvin Marr, Scotland

Pvt. John Nichols, Hampton

Pvt. George Rogers, Franklin

Pvt. Austin Seymour, Lebanon (deserted)

Pvt. John Williams, Franklin

Company C

Pvt. Henry Wood, Franklin

Company D

Pvt. Sam Francis, Franklin

Company E

Pvt. Joseph A. Davis, Windham

Company F

Pvt. Richard Anthony, Franklin

Pvt. George Johnson, Scotland

Pvt. John Randall, Franklin

Company H

Cpl. Caesar Hall, Hampton

Pvt. William H. Brown I, Plainfield

Pvt. William H. Brown II, Coventry

Pvt. Jer. A. Gardiner, Columbia

Company I

Pvt. Edmund H. Talbot, Mansfield

Company K

Pvt. William Anderson, Mansfield

Pvt. Samuel Burden, Mansfield

Pvt. Walter P. Coleman, Mansfield

Pvt. Benjamin Jackson, Columbia

Pvt. James P. Wooster, Mansfield

Recruits

Pvt. John Q. A. Hall, Hampton

Pvt. Morris Holbert, Hampton

Pvt. Elisha Thomas, Mansfield



19. Private Henry W. Thorne of Willimantic: We Will Find You. A large zinc monument in the Old Willimantic Cemetery marks the plot of the Thorne family. Civil War soldier Edwin M. Thorne (1846-1910) is among those buried there. The name of his older brother, Henry W. Thorne (c. 1837-64), is also on the monument, but his body lies elsewhere, probably buried somewhere near Drury's Bluff, VA, where he died in battle on May 10, 1864. The clue is in the following poem, etched under his name on the family monument.

**"No more the bugle calls the weary one;
Rest, noble spirit, in the grave unknown.
We will find you, we will know you,
Among the good and true,
When the robe of white is given
For the faded coat of blue."**

20. Sergeant William B. Hooper of Willimantic: Medal of Honor Recipient. The Congressional Medal of Honor is America's highest award for military valor. It is bestowed only on those who have performed an act of such gallantry as to rise "above and beyond the call of duty." One recipient was William Hooper, the son of Willimantic cotton mill workers. Hooper, a Willimantic man, who enlisted with the New Jersey Cavalry, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1865. According to the 1860 U.S. census, Hooper was one of three children born to mill operatives John and Mary Hooper. He was awarded the citation for heading off the enemy at Chamberlain's Creek and possibly shooting two color bearers (flag carriers) and saving the company and their horses. Hooper, a mariner, died in 1870 in Caldera, Chile, age 29. His official military gravestone is in the Old Willimantic Cemetery.

539 men earned certificates of honor in the Mexican-American War of the 1840s, before the Medal of Honor originated. About 1500 Congressional Medals of Honor were awarded during the Civil War. As of 1985, from the Civil War through the Viet Nam War, 3,394 Congressional Medals of Honor were awarded. 3,393 medals were awarded to men and one was awarded to a woman.

IN MEMORY OF
WILLIAM B
HOOPER



MEDAL OF HONOR
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CIVIL WAR
1841
1870

21. General Nathaniel Lyon of Eastford: Among the First to Fall. Nathaniel Lyon of Eastford, became the first Union General to die in battle during the Civil War. Lyon led his troops to St. Louis to protect a federal arsenal and to hold the city and the state of Missouri against the Confederates. On August 10, 1861, he fought at the Battle of Wilson's Creek in Missouri. Lyon's horse was shot out from under him, he was shot several times, and he died from his wounds. General Lyon's body was returned home for burial. Some ten thousand people lined the route from the Willimantic railroad depot to the Eastford cemetery to pay their respects at his funeral and burial on September 5, 1861.

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