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NATIONALISM IN NEW ENGLAND:

KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

by

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Abstract: Nationalism in New England: Keene, New Hampshire and the American Civil War

Between 1861 and 1865 the United States was divided by civil war, testing the will of Americans North and South. The war brought with it challenges and adversity of unprecedented magnitude. This dissertation examines one specific Northern community, the town of Keene, New Hampshire, during the American Civil War. It argues that, despite a lack of significant wartime experience, the people of this New England town were prepared to meet the challenges of the crisis. During the war the people of Keene utilized existing institutions, organizations, and traditions to foster and sustain support for the war. By doing so they were able to build and maintain a successful wartime nationalism. This study examines private letters, newspaper accounts, and other contemporary documents to demonstrate how the people of this New Hampshire community acted collectively to support the war effort. By focusing on the experience of one community this study allows a more intimate view of the wartime activities and motivations on the Northern home front. This study provides insights into actions of people on the local level, which ultimately contributed to the preservation of the Union and a redefined sense of the nation.
Introduction

In April 1861 the United States faced a crisis of unprecedented magnitude, as the country erupted into civil war. By mid-summer, initial hopes for a quick and decisive end to the war were dashed, and as the conflict continued, Americans witnessed carnage on a scale that was previously unimaginable. While the conflict would be waged on the battlefield, popular support on the home front was crucial to sustaining the war effort and to building a strong and durable nationalism. Over time, northerners successfully developed a nationalistic spirit that validated expanding war goals and framed the high cost of the conflict as worthy of preserving the Union.

But how did Northerners, far-removed from the physical carnage and destruction of battle, experience the war, and more specifically, the process of building nationalism? The mid-nineteenth-century United States was a decentralized nation, with a small federal government in Washington, D.C., exerting only minimal central authority. For most people, beyond mail delivery and a sense of national security, the federal government played very little role in their daily lives. However, the Civil War called on Northerners to work collectively to preserve the nation. So how did Northerners so readily adapt to a collective effort with millions of fellow Americans scattered across a broad landscape? To help answer these questions, I have chosen to examine the actions of one particular community during this time: Keene, New Hampshire. Founded in 1753 in southwestern New Hampshire, in 1861 the town was rapidly growing on the foundation of a thriving agricultural, industrial, and commercial economy. It also served as the seat of Cheshire County. Boasting a population of around 4,000 people when the war began,
Keene was a substantial New England community but one whose residents still knew one another.

In this era of decentralized authority, construction of Northern nationalism was largely dependent on loyalties to local institutions and associations. This unique dynamic raises important questions. How well would local loyalties nurture allegiance to the nation? Or, would loyalty to local institutions and associations compete with national loyalty? In his 1962 essay “The Historian’s Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa,” David Potter explains that “national loyalty flourishes not by challenging and overpowering all other loyalties, but by subsuming them all and keeping them in a reciprocally supporting relationship with one another.” Thus, “the strength of the whole is not enhanced by destroying the parts, but is the sum of the parts.” He emphasizes this relationship by claiming that “the only citizens who are capable of strong national loyalty are those who are capable of strong group loyalty, and such people are likely to express this devotion to their religion, their community, and their families, as well as their love of country.” For the citizens of Keene, therefore, national loyalty did not need to supersede the well-established local loyalties in order to construct wartime nationalism. As Potter explains, “The nationalism which will utilize this capacity most effectively… is not one that overrides and destroys all other objects of loyalty, but one that draws them into one transcendent focus.”

As in thousands of other American communities, before the Civil War Keene was home to numerous local institutions and organizations, which not only garnered loyalty, but also provided the people of the community with a sense of grounding, familiarity, and shared experience. Thus, when the war began it was natural that the citizens of Keene turned to these

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local institutions and practices to support the national effort. In this dissertation I will argue that
during the American Civil War the people of Keene, New Hampshire, utilized the existing
institutions, practices, and traditions that had bound them as a locality to help build American
nationalism. By doing so they were able to successfully sustain their support for the war effort
and strengthen bonds between themselves and the nation. A myriad of local civic institutions
demonstrated remarkable flexibility in adapting to the crisis. The Keene Town Hall, Cheshire
County Agricultural Society, the fire departments, lecture halls, banks, and churches were among
the most prominent examples of permanent local institutions that helped, at the local level, to
forge wartime nationalism. In an era with few structures of national authority, Keene citizens
relied on these well-established and familiar community foundations to channel their energies
toward the national cause. By doing so they were able to direct their efforts through these local
organizations into what Potter calls “one transcendent focus” on the nation.

As the war progressed, efforts at the local level became interconnected with a number of
national wartime networks. In her book *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in
the Civil War North*, Melinda Lawson notes that in 1861 “Americans were a young people” who
“held powerful loyalties to their towns, their states, and their regions,” but “their loyalty to nation
was yet untested.” And in this era of decentralized power “the job of defining the war in patriotic
terms fell largely to private individuals and associations.”2 Her book describes the role of what
she terms as six “national projects” that helped foster collective action of Northerners to support
the war effort. Through this process, which included putting more trust into national interests,

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2 Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 2. The six national projects were Sanitary Fairs, financier Jay Cooke, Republican and Democratic Parties, Union Leagues, abolitionists, and Abraham Lincoln.
she claims that Americans forged a new nationalism that helped win the war and redefined the relationship between the people and the nation.³

While Lawson takes a top-down approach, this study will view the forging of nationalism from the ground up. These two views are not at odds with one another, but rather, complementary. We will see how these massive national networks were dependent upon local practices and traditions for success. We will see how local efforts quickly evolved and grew to link up with larger organizations such as the U.S. Sanitary Commission, forming national networks that both supported the war and strengthened bonds between the people of Keene and their fellow countrymen and women. And while Lawson readily admits that hers was “not a study of the hearts and minds of the people”⁴ these factors will be an important part of mine. By focusing on one specific community we are able to see how the thoughts and actions of individuals and small organizations helped rally support for the war and, in some cases, even define American identity in their everyday lives. This in-depth exploration of local contributions, including the minutia of community wartime activity, is integral to our understanding of how Northern nationalism was constructed and sustained throughout the conflict.

³ Along with David Potter’s 1962 “The Historian’s Use of Nationalism and Vise-Versa” and Melinda Lawson’s Patriot Fires, several other works on Northern nationalism during the Civil War have given various insights. These include Peter Parish’s The North and the Nation in the Era of the Civil War, published in 2003, which provides perhaps the most comprehensive view of Northern nationalism. The book, a collection of Parish’s essays, explores a number of important issues including regional identity, the importance of federalism and the Constitution to constructing American identity in the 19th century, as well as the crucial relationship between local actions and the national war effort. J. Matthew Gallman’s discussion of nationalism in The North Fights the Civil War: The Home Front stresses the continued localistic nature of Civil War Northerners’ efforts. Adam Smith’s No Party Now: Politics in the Civil War North describes the crucial role of political parties in redefining American identity during the war. More recent studies have even placed American Civil War nationalism in a broader context, viewing the concept on the international level. These works include The Revolution of 1861: The Civil War in the Age of Nationalist Conflict by Andre Fleche, published in 2012, as well as the 2011 article “Nationalism and Internationalism in the Era of the Civil War,” published in the Journal of American History.

⁴ Lawson, Patriot Fires, 13.
One of the keys to ultimate Union success was the ability of Northerners to adapt readily to meet the needs of the war effort. This capacity to adapt came from long-engrained experience with organizing over the nation’s history. During his travels in the 1830s Alexis de Tocqueville was profoundly impressed by the tendency of Americans to organize. In *Democracy in America* he declared, “Americans of all ages, all stages of life, and all disposition are forever forming associations” that included “religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute.” Anywhere in the United States that there was a “new undertaking,” he claimed “you are sure to find an association.” And in a recent study of the evolution of American towns, historian David Russo noted that this “proclivity for forming voluntary associations…deepened throughout the [nineteenth] century as work and leisure time became separated.” By mid-century, the people of Keene, New Hampshire, like those of hundreds of other American communities, were accustomed to coming together to address a particular cause. When news of Fort Sumter reached Keene, it was as if the townspeople instinctively knew how to respond, as if each person knew his or her respective role. Over the course of the war this ability to organize would play an integral role in providing mobilization and support. These voluntary associations proved extremely efficient, often cooperating and adapting to meet the immediate and most pressing needs of the time, as well as navigating through the challenges of building nationalism on the local level.

One of the most important local institutions for building nationalism, and a major part of this study, was the newspaper. Historian Benedict Anderson claims that print capitalism was integral to the rise of modern nationalism, fostering an “imagined community” among disparate

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groups of fellow countrymen and women. At the time of the Civil War, Keene was home to two weekly newspapers, each a mouthpiece for their respective political parties. The *New Hampshire Sentinel* was an ardent supporter of the Republican Party, while the *Cheshire Republican* promoted the views of the Democracy. Initially these two papers fostered solidarity by urging support for the Northern effort to crush the rebellion. As the war progressed, however, the nature of the conflict began to change. Expanding federal powers and emancipation exacerbated old political divisions, giving rise to competing views of northern nationalism. Like the majority of Northerners, not all Keene residents envisioned the nation in the same way. This political division became one of the obstacles to building wartime nationalism. Ultimately it was the pro-Republican *New Hampshire Sentinel* that became crucial to maintaining support for the Lincoln Administration in their successful prosecution of the war.

The local efforts of Keene residents to support the war were often motivated by, and connected to, well-established traditions and beliefs. Local holiday celebrations, fast days, and even funerals often fostered national spirit, reinforcing ties between the community and the nation. The legacy of the American Revolution was extremely important to the people of Keene. Many of town’s ancestors had fought in the war that secured independence, while even more attributed their own freedoms and opportunities to the sacrifices of the Founding Generation. This legacy was bolstered by their unique sense of identity as New Englanders, who saw themselves as stewards of the republic and who constructed a unique paternalistic sense of nationalism that envisioned the rest of the country as a reflection of themselves. The Civil War threatened to destroy all that the Founding Fathers had bestowed upon them as Americans, and, as a result, this threat strengthened their resolve to uphold these sacred traditions.
This dissertation is arranged, more or less, chronologically, but does take the time to examine certain themes in a broader context. Chapter 1 provides a very brief and general history of the community from its colonial beginnings until the start of the Civil War. It also examines the concept of New England identity, which gave the residents of the region a unique foundation for their sense of American nationalism. Chapter 2 describes the town’s initial reaction to the news of Fort Sumter in April 1861. In it, we see how the residents of the town came together to foster solidarity of purpose and how they quickly mobilized for war. The chapter introduces the importance of religious institutions, newspapers, women’s charitable work, and popular culture to building nationalism on the local level.

Following the initial outpouring of patriotism during the opening months of the war, the people of Keene had to come to terms with the prospect of a long and costly conflict. Chapter 3 explores how the community continued to utilize traditional institutions and practices to cope with these realizations and continue to support the war effort. By 1863, the challenges of war were exacerbated by the introduction of emancipation as a Union war goal, forcing Northerners to reevaluate both their concept of a postwar American citizenry, as well as the acceptance of the rapidly expanding powers of their federal government. Chapter 4 explores how the local Republican newspaper argued forcefully for federal use of emancipation in an effort to thwart a growing resistance from the Democratic side. The chapter also explains the importance of the public lecture to 19th century communities. And finally, we pick up on the significance of regional connections and New England identity during the war.

Major wars inevitably alter life on the home front to some degree. During the Civil War the army quickly became synonymous with the future of the Union itself, and in Chapter 5, we see how this heightened importance of the army was reflected on the home front. A distinct
military culture began to appear in the thoughts and actions of women, imbuing their work with a sense of political purpose. We also explore the influence of military culture on the community’s commercial world. These manifestations provided another tangible link between the local people of Keene and the national cause.

The elections of 1864 served as a referendum on the fate of the nation itself. American voters were offered a choice between continuing the war under Lincoln’s policies, or choosing a Democratic candidate who favored compromise with the South and a reversal of most federal policies. Chapter 6 highlights the importance of the local Republican press to maintain support for the Lincoln Administration and help define the Unionist view of American identity. The *New Hampshire Sentinel* was key to sustaining the Republican view of nationalism at the local level, which required unwavering support for expansive federal powers and policies. The chapter ends with the aftermath of Lincoln’s assassination, which reveals the personal connections that had been forged between the people of Keene and the president through four years of war.
Chapter 1
Keene, New Hampshire

Keene, New Hampshire has its roots as a colonial community. In 1733 the royal governor of Massachusetts approved a survey of the uninhabited region along the Ashuelot River of southwest New Hampshire. After obtaining land grants in Concord, Massachusetts in early 1734 the first group of 63 settlers began to clear the wilderness that fall. The early colonial settlement, called Upper Ashuelot, soon evolved to a small village consisting several primitive dwellings. However, mounting tension between the French and the English in the mid-eighteenth-century made the community’s frontier location a precarious one. Several French-incited Indian raids forced a temporary abandonment of the village in 1746. In 1748 settlers began making their way back to the settlement and rebuilding. In 1753 the State of New Hampshire granted a charter, and the community was officially incorporated as the town of Keene, named after Sir William Keene of England. By the time of the French and Indian War (1754-1763) Keene and surrounding villages “were more firmly established and better able to meet the threat of war than in earlier years.”\(^8\) Local militia, often in conjunction with Massachusetts soldiers, defended the region against Indian attacks. A number of Keene men also served in the colonial army in the war against France.\(^9\)

\(^8\) Keene History Committee, *Upper Ashuelot: A History of Keene, New Hampshire* (Keene, NH: City of Keene, 1968), 17.

\(^9\) Ibid., 18.
Illustration 1-1. Modern map of New Hampshire showing Keene in Cheshire County, lower left.

(http://www.nationsonline.org/maps/USA/New_Hampshire_map.jpg)

British victory over the French in the region by 1760 ended Keene’s vulnerability to Indian attacks. In the years before the Revolution the town evolved as its population grew from 430 in 1767 to 645 by 1773, and Keene was named country seat. During this time sawmills and gristmills were constructed as well as a new town meetinghouse and school. In April 1775 news of violence at Lexington and Concord spurred the citizens of Keene into action. The
community’s participation in the American Revolution (discussed in detail later) would later become an integral part the town’s heritage and identity, and an essential component of wartime nationalism.

The years between the Revolution and the turn of the century saw an influx of new settlers. Public schools were established and the town began printing its own newspapers, most notably the *New Hampshire Sentinel* which published its first issue in 1799 and has been in continuous operation ever since. The population in 1790 was 1,314 people including two slaves.\(^\text{10}\)

The early nineteenth century saw further improvements. A permanent highway was built from Boston that ran through Keene. And in 1829 a regular stage coach, the “Telegraph Despatch Line,” began operating between Keene and Boston, bringing in outside news and goods, along with mail delivery three times per week.\(^\text{11}\) A highly successfully glass factory was established in town as well as banks, fire departments, and Keene’s first public library. The town’s central location in Cheshire County made it a crossroads community. A substantial and ever-improving road network brought travelers from all directions, providing the town’s taverns and hotels with a brisk and steady business. Traveling entertainments frequented the town’s public venues, including plays, lectures, concerts, and even circuses, enriching the cultural life of the residents.

Keene was highly literate community which promoted education. The 1820s saw the establishment of the Keene Debating Society, Keene Book Society, Keene Forensic Society and Lyceum, and a public circulating library that contained one thousand volumes. During this time

\(^{10}\) KHC, *Upper Ashuelot*, 36.

there were also two bookstores in town. A private school named Keene Academy was founded 1827 followed a year later by the public Keene High School. Miss Catherine Fisk established her Young Ladies’ Seminary, which brought both her and her institution wide acclaim.\(^{12}\)

Along with most other American communities, Keene suffered temporary setbacks during the financial crisis of 1837, but soon recovered. The Faulkner & Colony Woolen Mills, the largest business the town had yet seen, opened in 1838 and quickly became the backbone of the town’s industrial economy. Another major milestone in the community’s evolution was the opening of the first rail line to Keene in 1848. The railroad not only facilitated trade and travel with other regions but also added another dimension to the town’s economy. By the 1850s the towns’ railroad facility employed sixty workers, and that number would continue to grow rapidly.\(^{13}\) The construction of the rail line was done primarily by Irish immigrants, many of whom stayed on to become permanent residents. According to one town historian, “The Irish, the first important influx since the settlement days, brought a new spirit to the community, a labor force for the developing industries, and a new dimension to the Yankee scene in Keene, as elsewhere throughout New England.”\(^{14}\)

While the Irish did add a bit of diversity to the population, the community continued to be predominantly white Anglo-Saxon Protestant through the Civil War. In 1860 people of Irish descent made up less than 10% of the population. By 1850 the town had a population of 3,392, which included only eleven African Americans.\(^{15}\) Keene was home to churches of five different religious denominations by mid-century as well.

\(^{13}\) KHC, *Upper Ashuelot*, 92.  
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 87.  
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 450.
Residents marked the town’s centennial in 1853 with a major celebration that demonstrated the people’s tremendous civic pride. The 1850s saw steady growth in Keene as the community continued to improve and prosper. According to a town historian, “Between 1856 and 1859 nearly 100 new buildings went up, including many new residences. Central Square was fully developed, the railroad had become a local fixture, and Keene’s industrial life was quickening its pace.”\textsuperscript{16} In 1860 the town’s population numbered just over four thousand people.

A visitor to the town paints this picture of Keene, New Hampshire just on the verge of the Civil War: “Nearly in the middle of the county, on a broad plain...surrounded by hills is the smart and beautiful village of Keene. Its broad, straight, and well-made streets and sidewalks; its many large and ornamental trees; its elegant dwelling houses and fine gardens; its convenient ‘Square’ and miniature park render it absolutely the handsomest village of the size in the Eastern States.”\textsuperscript{17}

**New England Identity**

In early 1862 a young English journalist named Edward Dicey travelled to the United States to report on the war. After arriving in New York City the writer set out on a five month journey across the Northern states to the Mississippi River and then back east. Gifted with a keen sense of observation, Dicey recorded his daily impressions of the people and places he visited, and by doing so he captured a sense of the Northern populace in the midst of war.

\textsuperscript{16} KHC, *Upper Ashuelot*, 102.
\textsuperscript{17} Griffin, *History of Keene*, 468.
Arriving back east in early June he entered New England for the very first time. He was immediately struck by the distinctive character of the New England region.

“The change is as great in coming from Chicago to Boston as it is in passing from England to Massachusetts,” declared Dicey. He was particularly impressed by the “oldness of New England,” explaining, “Coming, as I did, to Massachusetts from the Far West, my prevailing feeling was, all along, that I had got back to an Old World civilization.” This sense of antiquity and history, contrasted with the transient and upstart qualities of the West, made the young Englishman “feel pleasantly that I was getting home.”

Dicey’s impressions speak to the larger issue of regional identity, in this case a “New England identity,” within a national framework. An 1863 letter from a “Business Man” in Chicago to a colleague in Boston provides further perspective on this collective New England identity. The letter, which ran under the newspaper heading “NEW ENGLAND AND THE WEST: What a Business Man Thinks,” reads, in part, “When New England is left out in the cold, the West goes with her. The Northwest is but a clip cut from New England and planted in richer and deeper soil. If she out-tops her, it is nothing strange. Many a dutiful and loyal son stands head and shoulders taller than his mother, but that makes him all the more ready to give her due respect, and, if need be, protection.” Here we see New England as the “mother” of the young West, a theme that was widely held by many New Englanders at this time.

Some historians have pointed to the “short history” of the United States as being problematic to establishing national identity. However, by the time of the Civil War New
Englanders had a rich and storied past, fraught with hardships, loss, perseverance, and triumphs. Bernard Bailyn notes that even by the mid eighteenth-century, Americans, while they still viewed themselves as British, nonetheless “had behind them a century, more or less, of their own history, and they were aware of distinctive characteristics of their own culture.” The colonial experience had created a culture and sensibility that was in a number of ways different than their British counterparts. (This contrast was clearly evident during the strained cooperative effort in the French and Indian War.) Viewed in this way the American Revolution may be seen as, in a way, a reification of this American spirit as opposed to a rigid starting point.

By the mid-nineteenth century New England was indeed a distinctive region, “bonded by a common folk culture based on English roots that differed distinctly from that of both the South and the Midwest.” The evolution of this unique regional identity can be traced back to New England’s colonial roots, and even by the mid eighteenth century, as historian David Waldstreicher states, “New Englanders had a long tradition of national regionalism,” which stretched “from the Puritans of the 1630s to the Boston rebels of the 1760s.”

These bonds of “national regionalism” and identity remained a powerful and palpable force during the years of the Early Republic, as New England became the home to staunch Federalism. Jeffersonian foreign policies provoked strong collective reaction in many New Englanders, who even threatened at times to break from the Union. But as historian Joseph Conforti explains, during this period New England Federalists “wrapped secessionist politics in the flag of Revolutionary patriotism – a maneuver that was simultaneously regional and national.” They held the view that New England “had been in the forefront of the struggle for

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independence, whereas Virginia had betrayed the original plan of union.” Therefore, “it remained for the descendants of the Puritans to redeploy their resistance to British tyranny.”

These common provincial views helped cement ties between the New England states. A poem stitched to a sampler by a young Salem, Massachusetts girl reflects this sense of New England nationalism in the early nineteenth century.

Amy Kitteredge is my name
Salem is my dwelling place
New England is my nashun
Christ is my salvation

What emerged during these formative years was a unique nationalism in which New Englanders continued to see themselves as the true heirs to the legacy of the Revolution and envisioned a nation that was a reflection of New England. Stephanie Kermes explains that, “The creation of American nationalism in the decades after Independence was paradoxically a distinctly regional process…Americans in New England thought that to be an American meant primarily to be a New Englander. They came to believe that in the creation of the new American identity their region should serve as a model for all other Americans.”

One result of these sentiments was a vast amount of “visual and material evidence” that reflected New England’s “nationalist culture.” As Stephanie Kermes explains, this tremendous output of cultural material “shows that early republican New Englanders not only perceived the

22 Joseph Conforti, *Imagining New England: Explorations of Regional Identity from the Pilgrims to the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 120.
23 Ibid., 121.
new ideology but also supported the expansion of that nationalistic ideology and helped spread it among their children and their neighbors.” This “material culture of New England nationalism” helps us to understand “how and to what degree ordinary people absorbed and performed that ideology. It shows a manifestation of a New England American identity in the region’s everyday life…” So the idea of New England nationalism was not simply some vague concept put forth among political or intellectual circles but something that all New Englanders were exposed to on a continual basis.25

The controversy over the War of 1812 largely helped reaffirm this sense of “New England” nationalism when, once again, the Federalists of the region took it upon themselves to try to dictate the proper course of action for the entire nation. Despite their vehement opposition to the congressionally sanctioned War of 1812, New England Federalists viewed their actions as both just and in accordance with their own ideals of nationalism. “Celebrating themselves as sons of the Revolution and the true Americans” New England Federalists were not acting in a disloyal manner, for they continued to believe in their ideological “claim to embody the nation, no matter what came out of Washington…Thus the sectional perspective of New England federalists drew from, and did not really contradict their nationalism.”26 David Waldstreicher explains that by “placing themselves simultaneously in the lineage of the Puritans and the founding fathers, New England Federalists constructed a mythic South and West that possessed no real claims to the legacy of the Revolution.”27 By defending the beliefs of the region, New Englanders saw their actions as a defense of the nation at large.

25 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 258.
And as slavery increasingly contributed to sharp fundamental differences between North and South, “many New Englanders began to see themselves as better republicans and better Americans than their Southern countrymen. This growing sectionalism component of New England’s nationalism shaped America’s history of the nineteenth century.” What emerged, claims Stephanie Kermes, was “a sense of superiority and exclusiveness” along with a “common virtue” that “defined the New England national identity” and “distinguished them from Europeans and Southerners.”

After 1820 (the bicentennial of the Pilgrims’ landing) New Englanders would continue to reaffirm and even reconstruct a regional identity, which they believed was the “true” American national identity. And by drawing on traditional New England characteristics, particularly links to the Puritans and Revolutionary War, “in the years leading up to the Civil War, New England continued to differentiate itself from the South and to pursue a regional aspiration to shape the culture of the North.” David Waldstreicher contends that “even into the nineteenth century, latter day Puritans could still see the emergence of an American empire as a direct continuation of their original project.”

Historian Charles Clarke traces the state of New Hampshire’s deliberate attempt to identify itself with the story of Plymouth Rock. He explains that, beginning in the 1760s, prominent members of Boston began conflating the stories of Plymouth Colony and the Massachusetts Bay Colony, despite the fact that they were two separate and distinct ventures. This narrative “had a natural appeal in Revolutionary-era Boston” due to the fact that “it was easy and ideologically satisfying to associate the landing at Plymouth with the broader idea of

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national foundation, the founding of a nation of freedom.”\textsuperscript{31} During the bicentennial of the founding of Plymouth Rock, the people of New Hampshire became stricken with “Pilgrim-mania,” Clark explains. Through speeches, stories, and songs these bicentennial celebrations reinvented New Hampshire identity by making connections to the people of the Mayflower. This new mythological Puritan identity became fixed and persisted well into the twentieth century.

This narrative also contributed to New England regional identity. Clark explains that for all New Englanders “the image of Plymouth Rock, especially when combined with that of the American Revolution, were far from inconsequential in formulating the early nineteenth-century mythology of nationhood that was transmitted by elite New Englanders to subsequent generations.”\textsuperscript{32} And even as New Hampshire was making efforts to establish a state identity through political means in the early nineteenth-century “its actual history was curiously absent. Instead, the impulse to identify with the New England story,” which was the foundation of “the American story…carried the day.”\textsuperscript{33}

John Conforti explains that during the antebellum years an assortment of “writers, artists, reformers, and politicians, as well as ministers became the agents of New England’s national regionalism.”\textsuperscript{34} Between 1820 and midcentury there was a renewed effort to “redefine New England as a distinctive place with a ‘peculiar’ people and a sacred past.” And this New England identity even included a sense of regional wartime nationalism, perhaps the best

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{34} Conforti, \textit{Imagining New England}, 123.
example of which is the short story “The Gray Champion,” written by Nathaniel Hawthorne and published in 1837. The tale takes place on the streets of Boston in 1680 and describes a confrontation between tyrannical Royal Governor Sir Edmund Andros’s army and the disgruntled citizens of the town. Amidst the tension of the standoff there appeared, “the figure of an ancient man, who seemed to have emerged from among the people, and was walking by himself along the centre of the street, to confront the armed band. He wore the old Puritan dress, a dark cloak and a steeple crowned hat, in the fashion of at least fifty years before, with a heavy sword upon his thigh, but a staff in his hand to assist the tremulous gait of age.”

The ancient ghostlike Puritan figure, by his mere presence, halted the march and silenced the drums of Andros’s soldiers. Hawthorne writes, “That stately form, combining the leader and the saint, so gray, so dimly seen, in such an ancient garb, could only belong to some old champion of the righteous cause, whom the oppressor's drum had summoned from his grave.” The Bostonians “raised a shout of awe and exultation, and looked for the deliverance of New England.” The army dispersed and, according to the tale, the next day Andros was removed from power.

But in the immediate aftermath of the incident it was discovered that no one could identify who the “Gray Champion” was. Some claimed that the old man had simply “faded from their eyes, melting slowly into the hues of twilight, till, where he stood, there was an empty space. But all agreed that the hoary shape was gone. The men of that generation watched for his reappearance, in sunshine and in twilight, but never saw him more, nor knew when his funeral passed, nor where his gravestone was.” However, claims Hawthorne,
I have heard that whenever the descendants of the Puritans are to show the spirit of their sires, the old man appears again. When eighty years had passed, he walked once more in King Street. Five years later, in the twilight of an April morning, he stood on the green, beside the meeting-house, at Lexington, where now the obelisk of granite, with a slab of slate inlaid, commemorates the first fallen of the Revolution. And when our fathers were toiling at the breastwork on Bunker's Hill, all through that night the old warrior walked his rounds. Long, long may it be, ere he comes again! His hour is one of darkness, and adversity, and peril. But should domestic tyranny oppress us, or the invader's step pollute our soil, still may the Gray Champion come, for he is the type of New England's hereditary spirit; and his shadowy march, on the eve of danger, must ever be the pledge, that New England's sons will vindicate their ancestry.

Here Hawthorne makes a deliberate attempt to fuse the Puritan legacy with the New England patriots of the Revolution into a distinct regional “hereditary spirit.” He depicts this regional nationalism, not as a relic of the past, but as an innate and viable force that could be unsheathed if needed. The “domestic tyranny” may be a reference to the elements of the Southern “slave power” who were becoming more vocal in defense of the “Peculiar Institution” at this time.

The legacy of the American Revolution was an important element of the New England character and one which people of the region claimed a sense of ownership. Historian Beth Salerno explains that as America entered the Antebellum Era, a “distinctively New England-centered patriotism” emerged. She explains that “the national remembrance of the American Revolution was particularly intense in [New England], which began to see itself as the founder and defender of the moral and political integrity of the nation.” In an 1832 oration given at Keene, New Hampshire by resident Salma Hale to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of George Washington’s birth, one sees this sense of proprietorship of the Revolution. During his speech to the people of Keene, which both extolls the life and accomplishments of

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36 Ibid., 115.
Washington, as well the growth of the nation, Salma Hale twice makes specific mention of New England’s primary role in the country’s struggle for independence. During the 1760s, recounts Hale, actions of King George III and Parliament “bred doubts, suspicion, and alarm.” Talk of dissent grew until “a numerous body of sentinels of observation were planted in every portion of New England.” Hale qualifies his remark, “I say New England, for it was here that parliamentary regulations interfered most with the industry of the people. It was here that, deemed derogatory to the equal rights of British subjects wherever they might live, they were less regarded, and that the efforts made to enforce obedience first excited to action that spirit of independence which characterized in a greater or less degree, the inhabitants of all the colonies.” (emphasis added) Hale’s remarks amplify New Englanders’ role at the forefront of the Revolution, as well as the idea that New England’s “spirit of independence,” was subsequently reflected throughout the colonies.37

Salma Hale’s second reference to New England comes when recounting the events of 1775 and the decision to appoint Washington as commander of the newly formed army. “I must not permit this occasion to pass of doing merited honor to a man (John Adams) who has connected his name as indissolubly with these times as Washington his own with the more brilliant times which succeeded. No blood had then been shed, but in New England – no forces were then arrayed but New England forces, and these were under the command of a favorite son of Massachusetts [Gen. Artemus Ward].” It was New Englander John Adams who, through “disinterested magnanimity” and sound, prescient judgment, first nominated George Washington, “a son of Virginia.” to lead the army. Thus the South then became personally

37 Salma Hale, An Oration Delivered at Keene, NH, February 22, 1832, Being the Centennial Anniversary of the Birthday of Washington (Keene, NH: George Tilden Publisher, 1832) 12-13.
vested in the interest of the cause, establishing the bonds between the Southern colonies and New England that would be necessary to win the war.\textsuperscript{38}

By the 1850s the people of Keene, New Hampshire had developed deep-rooted ties with fellow New England states, particularly Massachusetts. In 1853 the town of Keene celebrated its centennial, and the official ceremonies included a series of processions, speeches, and toasts. An account of the proceedings reveals a substantial number of prominent participants from neighboring Massachusetts. The Boston Brigade Band, a popular brass and reed ensemble that performed throughout New England, supplied the music. Attorney Horatio Parker of Greenfield, Massachusetts was among the invited speakers. Other guests included Professor Joel Parker of Harvard University, Deacon Samuel Greele, Gideon Thayer, George Hale, and Isaac Parker, all of whom were from Boston.

An official toast was given to Keene’s Revolutionary heroes “Old Captain Wyman and the ‘Thirty Volunteers’ who marched, at twelve hours warning, against the Regulars” at Lexington and Concord, which was followed by the playing of Yankee Doodle by the band. Voluntary toasts included tributes to “The Traders of Keene forty years ago and the merchants of Boston today,” as well as “New Hampshire and Massachusetts, Keene and Boston – May they ever continue to pursue with one heart and one purpose whatever is patriotic, or elevated, or philosophic for the amelioration of man.”\textsuperscript{39} Not once in the account of the day’s festivities was there any reference to, or representatives from, the state capital of Concord, New Hampshire. This sense of New England identity, particularly the strong ties between Keene and Boston, would be important to sustaining the war effort in the coming decade.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{39} Griffin, \textit{History of Keene}, 454-56.
Chapter 2
The War Begins

The word of Fort Sumter reached Keene, New Hampshire, through the small room of the town’s telegraph office, where the operator received the urgent message on April 12, 1861. Among the first dispatches out of Charleston, South Carolina, read the stunning proclamation, “The ball has opened. War is inaugurated.”

For the residents of this New Hampshire town the news of war brought with it a great sense of uncertainty about the future. Yet these people seemed to know instinctively how to respond. Relying on existing institutions and a well-practiced tradition of organizing, the residents of Keene took collective action to try to establish a sense of unity and solidarity in response to the crisis. In the early months of the war these goals were aided by two factors. First the attack on Fort Sumter brought on an overwhelming sense of urgency that the very fate of the nation was at stake. Second, Keene’s designation as a recruiting station provided a focus to the war effort, as well as a sense of immediacy to the conflict being waged hundreds of miles to the south.

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Public War Meetings

Three days after the firing on Fort Sumter President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 troops to suppress the rebellion. In response, members of both Republican and Democratic parties in Keene cooperated in the printing of handbills, which were then disseminated throughout Cheshire County, announcing a “war meeting” on Monday, April 22, in Central Square.\(^4\) From the start of the war public meetings were an integral component of the town’s mobilization. The Town Hall often served as a meeting place for these assemblies, and Central Square provided a venue for larger gatherings. These wartime meetings were often called on short notice for a specific purpose, and were strikingly efficient as prominent local men assumed leadership roles, committees were formed, and resolutions were created and passed. Oftentimes nationalistic rhetoric was infused with a sense of urgency and necessity in attempt to create wartime solidarity.

By one o’clock on April 22, a massive crowd had gathered on the town square, the largest mass meeting in the settlement’s history. The people stood on nearly the same spot where Keene residents had assembled in April 1775 in reaction to the news of Lexington and Concord. A local photographer, perched atop a nearby roof, captured this pivotal moment in the town’s history. The remarkable image shows a backdrop of neat brick buildings emblazoned with signs of local businesses. Several horse-drawn carriages skirt the crowd of men, women, and children, which is gathered beneath the leafless branches of several small trees. All eyes are turned to the newly erected speakers’ platform, upon which sat a group of local dignitaries in their black stove pipe hats (Illustration 2-1).

\(^4\) NHS, 4/25/61.
At one o’clock on this spring afternoon, the voice of the Honorable Levi Chamberlain drifted over the crowd, calling the meeting to order. Next, in a “short patriotic speech,” Ex-Governor of New Hampshire Samuel Dinsmoor urged the crowd to have faith in the future. Even at this initial phase of the war Dinsmoor placed the plight of the local populace in the national context. “Amid the general gloom which pervades the community there is yet one cause for congratulation,” he urged, “that we at least see a united North.” There were no political
parties here, he declared, but rather the “big question” now was, “Shall we have a country to be
governed?”

Next to speak was 61-year-old attorney James Wilson, a Keene native who had grown to
national prominence during an impressive military and political career. At 6’4” tall, Wilson
exuded a commanding presence, one that had served him well throughout his life. Beginning in
1821, he had risen through the ranks of the state militia from captain to major general. His
political career included several terms in the state legislature where he also served as speaker of
the house. He was twice elected to the United States Congress (where he befriended Abraham
Lincoln) and during the 1850s was land commissioner in California. James Wilson’s father had
been a prominent Keene attorney and onetime schoolmate of John Quincy Adams. And a
generation before that, James Wilson’s grandfather Robert, an Irish immigrant, had soldiered in
both the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. During the latter he served at
Bennington and Saratoga as a major under General John Stark, legendary New Englander and
author of the rallying cry “Live Free or Die.”

And now, in April 1861, the Revolutionary War veteran’s grandson drew directly on the
nation’s past to sharpen the focus on the country’s present crisis. “Eighty-six years ago last
Friday, Massachusetts blood was shed on the plains of Lexington, and that was the first blood of
the Revolution,” he reminded the audience. “Last Friday, April 19th, the anniversary of the
Lexington sacrifice,” he continued, “Massachusetts blood flowed in the streets of Baltimore
while on the march to defend the national capital.”

42 NHS, 4/25/61; Simon Griffin, History of Keene, 470.
43 Griffin, History of Keene, 664-66.
44 NHS, 4/25/61.
Wilson then recounted in great detail the history of the United States beginning with the Treaty of Paris in 1783 “when our country was so clearly defined” and “all knew precisely where we stood.” He described the evolution of the nation and how, over time, the “growth and prosperity of the free North and West had excited the jealousy of ambitious southern politicians.” He claimed that Southern people were “educated to hate the people of the North – regarding them as cowardly, low-bred, and destitute of patriotism.” He urged the crowd to respond to these charges, saying that “every citizen who has a vote has an interest in Government.”

Keene attorney William Wheeler, who had literally rushed from work at the Court House a block away to attend, spoke next. Known as a master cross-examiner, the popular Wheeler addressed the crowd with “a few pertinent, earnest, patriotic words for the country – for the Union, for the Constitution, and the honor of the Stars and Stripes.” In a legalistic style he explained how Abraham Lincoln had been elected President “after a full and free discussion” and in a “Constitutional manner” and that secession violated the Constitutional principles of the nation. Wheeler urged unity at this crucial time by saying “we are all on board one ship. If one perishes all are lost.” He declared, “It is no time now to ask what political party you have belonged to or where you go to church on Sunday,” but instead the only issue that now mattered was, “Shall the [federal] government have the support of the people of New Hampshire!”

After an enthusiastic response to Wheeler several other speakers took turns on the platform. A series of official resolutions was read and unanimously adopted. Among them was that “the friends of the Union, of Liberty, and of the Constitution have ever been, and are still ready to fulfill as citizens of the Republic, all the duties devolved upon them by the

45 NHS, 4/25/61.
46 NHS, 4/25/61.
Constitution.” This act of rebellion “ought to and shall be met by the united voice and arms of freemen throughout the country.”

But why would this rhetoric carry such weight at this time? Why were these notions invoked so forcefully and with such passion at this moment of unprecedented crisis? What did these concepts of “Union” and “nation” mean to the people assembled on the square that spring morning? Historian Gary Gallagher has recently explained how the idea of “Union” has been somehow diluted in today’s understanding of the Civil War. He claims that to people of today the meaning of Union “has been almost completely effaced from popular understanding of the conflict” and has been superseded by the more “compelling” and morally driven “war to end slavery.” He claims that this shift in focus was largely the result of the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century as well as more popular culture treatments of the Civil War. However, for the mid-nineteenth century generation of Americans, this abstract idea of “Union” was a sacred political ideal that embodied what it meant to be an “American.” The concept of the Union, as defined by the Constitution, “represented the cherished legacy of the founding generation, a democratic republic with a constitution that guaranteed political liberty and afforded individuals a chance to better themselves economically.” It was the motivating factor behind Northern wartime efforts. In Keene at this stage of the war, this appears to be the case as well.

James Wilson’s strong rhetoric against Southerners may also be explained in these same nationalistic terms. In the minds of many Northerners, the existence of slaveholding society of the South ran counter to the idea of a republican Union. Now, with secession and Fort Sumter,

47 NHS, 4/25/61.
49 Ibid., 2.
the South had threatened to destroy what had become the freest nation in the world. Northerners felt an inherent duty to sustain their Union and Constitution so that the United States remained a shining example to the rest of the world. With so much at stake and so many emotional attachments to their nation, it is easy to understand the powerful and passionate backlash against Southern aggression.

The April 22 outdoor rally concluded with the singing of the “patriotic song” *The Flag of Our Union*:

“A song for our banner!” – the watch word recall  
Which gave the Republic a station:  
“United we stand – divided we fall!”  
It made and preserves us a nation!

CHORUS  
The Union of lakes-the union of lands-  
The Union of States none can sever-  
The union of hearts – the union of hands-  
And the Flag of the Union forever  
And ever!  
The Flag of the Union forever!

What God in his mercy and wisdom design’d  
And arm’d with his weapons of thunder,  
Not all the earth’s despots and faction combined  
Have the power to conquer or sunder!  
Chorus- The union of lakes, etc.

Oh keep the flag flying! – The pride of the van!  
To all other nations display it!  
The ladies for union are all to a –man!  
But not to the man who’d betray it.  

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This song was not new; written by George Morris and William Bradbury, “The Flag of Our Union” was first published in 1851 in New York. Yet in April 1861 the citizens of Keene turned to this prewar song as yet another way to reaffirm national purpose and establish unity. The lyrics reflect important values of Northern nationalism such as the unquestionable permanency of Union, which God had designed as a symbol of liberty for the rest of the world. It also emphasizes the importance of both ideological unity ("the union of hearts") as well as the physical ("union of hands.") To loyal Northerners, the compact of Union was unbreakable and irrefutable.

The outdoor gathering fostered a sense of collective purpose for this Northern community and helped affirm both the meaning of the war as well as the need for action. Along with the rousing words of the speakers, the physical presence of so many people in one spot helped affirm a feeling of unity and confidence. Details from the above photograph reveal a mix of men, women, and children, underscoring a sense of true community solidarity in the face of the crisis. That sense of purpose carried into the evening of the 22nd when another meeting was held in the Town Hall "to take action in regard to aid for volunteers and their families who should enlist from this town in the service of their country." The meeting, cut short by a fire in the town, resumed the next evening, Tuesday April 23, again in the Town Hall. At the start of the proceedings the people of Keene once again looked to music for inspiration when they joined in singing the hymn "Our Country" to the melody of "America." One verse in this particular song clearly reveals where their allegiances lay:

No narrow State, in this dread hour,
Shall dare to claim your birth,
Allegiance to the Federal power

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51 NHS, 4/25/61.
52 NHS, 4/25/61.
Is more than Home or Hearth

The verse served as a rebuke to the Southern view of nationalism, which emphasized state rights at the peril of disunion.

The patriotic song also addressed the importance of the Founders’ legacy as well as the patriots’ sacrifice during the Revolution:

The laws your fathers writ in blood  
No impious thought shall break  
The flag they bore through fire and flood  
Let no true heart forsake

To the people of Keene, the ideals of the American Revolution were an integral component to wartime nationalism. As the aforementioned lyrics state, it was the Founding Fathers who had risked and sacrificed so much to forge this new nation. They had entrusted future generations to uphold the Union in the name of democracy. This legacy and memory of the American Revolution would be invoked continually over the course of the war to foster solidarity and nationalism. To this generation the Revolution was not merely a past historical event, but rather an almost sacred and ongoing process in which they themselves were actively and dutifully involved.

And as an old New England town, Keene, New Hampshire, had very profound and tangible connections to the Revolutionary War. On April 22, 1775, in response to the outbreak

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53 Beadle, Beadle’s Song Book, 51.  
54 Ibid.
of violence, 29 Keene men marched 90 miles to Boston to join the ranks.\textsuperscript{55} About 40 townsment fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill where two of them were killed.\textsuperscript{56} Over the course of the war 134 men from Keene enlisted to fight for their new nation and participated in many of the major battles and campaigns of the war. They fought under General George Washington at White Plains, Trenton, Princeton, and the Southern Campaigns concluding at Yorktown. Others served at Ticonderoga, and saw action at Bennington and Saratoga.\textsuperscript{57}

On the home front the people of Keene, whose population was then 756, also took action in support of the war. In 1776, 133 of the town’s 146 men over the age of 20 signed an official oath of loyalty to the American cause.\textsuperscript{58} That same year, when news of the Declaration of Independence arrived, the people of the community gathered in the town square and raised the stars and stripes to the top of a “Liberty Pole.” Over the course of the next seven years, Keene formed a Committee of Safety which helped garner resources. The town offered bounties for enlistment and the town served as a supply depot for the armies in the field.\textsuperscript{59}

And now in 1861 the community again mobilized for war. Two important factors in Keene would help provide a tangible and pragmatic connection to the war effort throughout the remainder of 1861. First, the town served as the county seat, making it a hub of smaller outlying communities. And second, it was connected by rail to major lines throughout the Northeast. Due to these two factors Keene was designated as a recruiting station.

\textsuperscript{55} Griffin, \textit{History of Keene}, 172-3.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 192-94.; KHC, \textit{Upper Ashuelot}, 26.
\textsuperscript{57} KHC, \textit{Upper Ashuelot}, 28.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 27.
During the evening meeting of April 23, 1861 a company of new recruits marched into the Town Hall and was greeted with applause that shook the walls of the large brick building. That evening, more resolutions were adopted, which pledged financial support for each recruit and their respective family. A month later the details were finalized: Each household dependent of a soldier who enlisted for three years would receive one dollar per week to compensate for his absence. The maximum amount per month was set at fourteen dollars.

This act of proffering financial support was also a practice inherited from the American Revolution. In 1777, the town of Keene voted to pay each man who enlisted in the Continental Army for three years the sum of thirty pounds. And 56 pounds was promised to those men who had already served if they reenlisted. These rewards were in addition to bounties then being offered by the State of New Hampshire. Thus, the tactic of using town funds to support military families had precedence. It helps explain the quick mobilization of the community and represents yet another way Keene residents could look to the Revolutionary generation for guidance in time of war.

At this point $5000.00 had already been raised by the people of Keene through $100.00 subscriptions. It was now suggested that subscriptions be made available in smaller amounts. The town’s financial institutions also generously contributed. The three local banks had each tendered between $10,000 and $30,000 to the State of New Hampshire “for war purposes.”

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60 NHS, 4/25/61.
61 NHS, 5/30/61.
62 Salma Hale, *Annals of the Town of Keene: From its First Settlement in 1734, to the Year 1790; With Corrections, Additions, and a Continuation from 1790 to 1815* (Keene: J.W. Prentiss and Company, 1851), 49.
63 NHS, 4/25/61; The amount of funds donated to the war effort demonstrates a substantial degree of wealth in Keene. According to town historian Simon Griffin in 1861 two banks in the state capital of Concord, New Hampshire offered loans to the state government totaling $50,000 while three banks in Keene contributed a total of $30,000 in loans. Griffin, *History of Keene*, 472.
The April 23 meeting then closed with a rendition of the Star Spangled Banner by the local glee club.\(^{64}\)

The initial news of the war disrupted the daily routine of the community, perhaps more so than at any time until Lincoln’s shocking death four years later. And with the war underway, many residents made an effort to publicly express their loyalty to the Union; “patriotism” was the watchword of the day. Officials of the Town Court opted to adjourn proceedings for two weeks “on account of the intense excitement and war spirit everywhere.” The lawyers and judges found it difficult to focus as “the legal spirit of contention seems to be smothered by the nobler spirit of PATRIOTISM.” The annual Teachers’ Institute, then in session, did continue “although the war excitement seriously affects it.” That body issued a statement assuring the public that “the Commissioner and all the teachers largely share in the patriotism around them.”\(^{65}\) On April 24 the *Cheshire Republican* stated “the points of attraction here have been at the news depots” and the local recruiting office. The forty new young volunteers “constantly parade the streets to the beat of the drum.” The paper concluded that “all else is adjourned to give place to patriotic enthusiasm.”\(^{66}\)

But not everyone in town was immediately preoccupied with reaction to the war. On the same day as the town’s war meeting in Central Square, eighteen-year-old Charles Ballou told his friend James Elliot, “Nothing of importance going on here, except the political furor.” It is clear the young man had other, more pressing, issues on his mind. “My peerless Katrina got home a week ago,” he told James. “I have called on her once since her arrival. She is very much the same as ever, except she sputters German a trifle.” He urged his friend, “We must study that,

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\(^{64}\) NHS, 4/25/61.  
\(^{65}\) NHS, 4/25/61.  
\(^{66}\) Cheshire Republican (afterward CR), 4/24/61.
Jamie, when we get into college, and not let the girls get ahead of us.” Charles Ballou’s sentiments are instructive and hint at the fact that life did continue despite the war. Personal letters written during the war years reveal a variety of interests from ice-skating, to real estate, to town gossip. This disconnect between everyday life at home and the horrors of the battlefield, a luxury of most far removed Northern communities, would certainly provide a challenge to wartime unity, especially as the demands of war increased in the coming years.

But the first few weeks following Sumter witnessed a flurry of activity in Keene, a release of the coiled tension of the secession winter. The outbreak of war spawned spontaneous responses by both organizations and individuals in the name of rekindled patriotism. The workers at the Cheshire Railroad hoisted a brand new American flag over their repair shop that measured 24’x15.’ The massive banner floated like a beacon, dominating the streets of town atop its 75’ flagpole. In late April a “company” of Keene’s Irish citizens “raised the stars and stripes” on one of the town greens and then proceeded to march through the streets to sound of fife and drum. In May, the Cheshire Republican newspaper ran a small piece titled “How to Make an American Flag.” The paper stated, “Notwithstanding the number now in use, few persons know how to make an American flag properly.” The article listed exact specifications of proper height, width, and placement of stars, stripes, and accompanying fields.

The scenes that transpired in Keene were repeated in communities big and small across the North following Fort Sumter. The goals were clear at this point in the national crisis: raise

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67 Charles Balou to James Elliot, April 22, 1861. Elliot Papers.
68 NHS, 5/16/61.
69 NHS, 5/2/61.
70 CR, 5/22/61.
and support troops to crush the rebellion. The Lincoln administration’s directive for 75,000 volunteers for three months of service provided a specific goal, which was met throughout the country with an overwhelming response.

Recruiting in Keene was brisk and vigorous. By late April, 67 volunteers had enlisted under recruiting officer and Keene resident Henry Henderson. Initially calling themselves the “Cheshire Light Guards,” the group left for Concord, New Hampshire, on April 25, where they would be mustered into the 1st NH Volunteers. Less than two weeks later another 141 recruits left Keene for Concord under Captain Tileston Barker. Keene would see a number of other Union volunteers pass through their village as the trains wound their way to the state capital of Concord, where they were officially mustered in before embarking for the front. Recruiting offices were opened in the second floor of several businesses in town. That fall, Company E, 6th New Hampshire was recruited in Keene under the direction of Keene citizen Obed Dort who was then appointed captain. And in November “Camp Brooks” was established about a mile west of the town square, which served as the training camp for one thousand men of the 6th New Hampshire Volunteers, who would remain there for almost two months. One town historian notes, “During their stay in Keene the officers of the regiment received polite attentions from the citizens, and accepted many invitations to social functions – a striking contrast to the hard and

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72 NHS, 5/2/61; Upper Ashuelot, 108; Griffin, History of Keene, 470-71.
73 KHC, Upper Ashuelot, 109; Griffin, History of Keene, 471.
74 On April 28 a company of eighty recruits from Claremont, NH passed through Keene on their way to Concord, NH and “were cheered by out two volunteer companies and a large crowd of citizens who had assembled at the depot.” NHS 5/1/61.
75 NHS, 11/21/61.
dangerous life which was before them.” Thus, for the people of the community the war in 1861 was not just some distant battle front but very evident here at home.

On September 6, 1861, citizens held another mass public meeting. They quickly erected a stand on the grounds outside the home of E.A. Chapin and soon a “large and enthusiastic” crowd, estimated at 3,000 people, gathered for the occasion. The speeches that followed captured the spirit of nationalism in Keene five months into the war.

In his book *Liberty, Virtue, and Progress: Northerners and their War for the Union*, Earl Hess states that at this early stage of the war Northerners were shocked by the “national trauma” of secession and the fact that the Southern states had resorted to such drastic measures. The justification for their outrage, claims Hess, often came through republican rhetoric, which not only provided a rallying cry for the Union but also reflected ideals still deeply felt by this American generation. It was the Union that had “provided solid, important advantages” to Americans, among them “their enjoyment of free institutions such as a representative form of democracy, free public education, governmental protection of private property, and support for individual achievement.”

These were the exact sentiments expressed at this outdoor rally in Keene that September afternoon. The proceedings commenced with “a few appropriate words of encouragement” from Honorable Levi Chamberlain, who had begun the first mass meeting on April 22. Then, prominent local attorney William Wheeler took the stand in front of the massive sea of faces. In “fervid and patriotic tones of eloquence” Wheeler denounced secession as “wicked.”

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76 Griffin, *History of Keene*, 491.
The attack on Fort Sumter was designed to humiliate us, and our national emblem. Our revolutionary fathers had not so much to fight for as we have. They had merely the hopes of liberty and free institutions. We have the realization of these with their perpetuity to inspire us, with the vast territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific shores. Our soldiers need all our sympathies, and men are here who have been to the battlefield. We want no lone star, no Palmetto flag, but the glorious old stars and stripes under which our fathers fought.\textsuperscript{78}

Wheeler’s appeal to the local community emphasized the importance of the soldiers who were fighting to uphold the right to these “free institutions.” And it was not merely a parochial, provincial view but rather one that encompassed the nation “from the Atlantic to the Pacific shores” and from the Founding Father’s “hopes and dreams” to the realization of these dreams by the present generation. Again the sense of nationalism as defined by Wheeler extended both geographically and generationally. In both cases the people of Keene were framed as integral participants in a much larger picture.

After the thunder of applause subsided James Wilson took the stand. “General” James Wilson was the distinguished and highly respected figure who had returned from an 11-year stay in California when the war began. As he had done in the first public meeting in April, Wilson reminded the crowd that for eighty years the United States had been prospering “as no other nation has prospered, under the Constitution our fathers made.” And now the South had violated that trust in the name of “mad ambition, and jealousy of the growth and prosperity of the free states.”\textsuperscript{79}

Wilson was a “masterful orator” whose “sonorous voice, magnetic presence, and extraordinary command of language” captivated audiences.\textsuperscript{80} As a native of Keene who had

\textsuperscript{78} NHS, 9/12/61.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Griffin, History of Keene, 470.
become a prominent politician, Wilson brought a national, even international, perspective to the meeting. He claimed that at this very moment England and France were interested in obtaining California, and if the Union were shattered, the Golden State would be lost to Europe. And then Wilson adroitly shifted his focus from the international to the highly personal and local. It was a masterful technique as it helped place the local populace into the context of the larger national story. He explained that he had just returned from Washington where he had spoken to several officers who had fought in the Battle of Bull Run in June. He assured the people of Keene that these officers confirmed that the 2nd New Hampshire Regiment “had fought most valiantly” in the engagement.\(^81\) Wilson’s speech helped link the local population of Keene’s efforts to the larger national, and even international, context. And the recent accounts about the honorable service of the 2nd New Hampshire served to validate the work done thus far by the people of Keene. Their support of the local regiment had been directly connected to the national effort.

On December 19, 1861, the citizens of Keene gathered en masse one last time that year for a public wartime rally. The event was a ceremony to present the 6th New Hampshire Volunteers with their official state and national colors. The regiment formed in a circle around Central Square while the “streets, sidewalks, and balconies in the vicinity…were crowded with spectators, a \textit{fair} sprinkling being ladies…to cheer by their presence and smiles the brave defenders of their homes and country.”\(^82\) New Hampshire governor Nathaniel Berry was on hand to present the colors and provide “a few soul-stirring and patriotic remarks.” His rhetoric echoed the sentiments of nationalism from the earlier public rallies in Keene that year, suggesting a unity of vision between the state and local towns. He denounced the rebellion as an

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\(^81\) NHS, 9/12/61.  
\(^82\) NHS, 12/26/61.
evil and “causeless” act committed “against the best government the world has ever known.” He then tied the day’s occasion to the national effort proclaiming that “more than half a million of our brave hearts and strong arms are today battling for the Constitution and the Union.” The overwhelming response of the country was confirmation that “our Northern people venerate and cherish the Constitution as our fathers framed it, and will never, no never consent that our fair fabric of government shall be by traitorous hands overthrown and despotism erected upon its ruins!” The governor promised the rebellion would be crushed and concluded with “a glowing tribute to our country and its free institutions.”

Upon accepting the “star spangled banner, the flag of our Union” along with the state colors, the unit’s colonel, Nelson Converse, acknowledged the “liberality of our state government” for providing for its soldiers. He too evoked the legacy of the Revolutionary War, pledging that his men would conduct themselves in a way that “those remembering the [Founding] fathers shall have no occasion to blush for their sons, nor shall the banner just presented suffer disgrace while in the keeping of the regiment.” Five days later the 6th New Hampshire marched through a foot of new-fallen snow to the town depot where they filled twenty-two railroad cars. At 9 a.m. the train departed Keene, bearing the unit off to war, where they would join hundreds of other three-year regiments leaving towns from across the North at that same time.84

83 NHS, 12/26/61.
84 NHS, 12/26/61.
Religious Institutions

Shortly after the war began Carlton Chase, the Bishop if the Diocese of New Hampshire, issued a statement “To the Clergy of New Hampshire” to be printed in newspapers across the state. In May the appeal appeared in Keene’s *Cheshire Republican* under the title “Prayer for the Country.” In it Bishop Chase stated, “I recommend the following Prayer for use in the services of the Church during the continuance of the evils, which now afflict our country. And to the laity I recommend its use in the devotion of the family and the closet.” The prayer clearly emphasized the concept of Providence as it appealed to “Almighty and eternal God, King of kings and Lord of lords, by whose judgment nations are cast down, and by whose mercy they rise again in strength and glory.” The prayer begs forgiveness of any sins and asks that “the Republic may be preserved in peace for many generations. Grant that our free institutions may stand as things that cannot be shaken, but which remain as monuments of thy protecting care and the patriotism of thy people.”

Thus the concept of the nation represented a combination of God’s will and the patriotic efforts of the American people.

In June of 1861, as they had done every year since 1827, clergymen from all the houses of worship in the county gathered for the annual Cheshire Conference of Churches. Along with the usual items on the agenda the group also addressed the national crisis and adopted the following resolution for publication in local papers:

Whereas, in the providence of God, it is a time of rebuke, rebellion, and peril in our land, therefore

*Resolved*, as the expression of the sentiments of the Cheshire County Conference, that we deeply sympathize with our Government in the conflict that has been

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85 *CR*, 5/22/61.
forced upon it, and that we will sustain it to the extent of our ability, by our prayers, our speech, our money, and if need be, our lives.\textsuperscript{86}

For the clergymen of Keene these were not hollow words. Over the course of the war they would attempt to fulfill all of the goals expressed in the conference resolution.

In 1861, Keene, New Hampshire, was home to five churches, consisting of Baptist, Methodist, Congregationalist, Episcopal, and Unitarian congregations, each with their own houses of worship. With the outbreak of war, many Keene citizens looked to their local religious institutions for support and direction during this period of national crisis. These religious associations would serve the purpose of mobilizing Keene residents for war in two vital ways: First, they would provide spiritual affirmation and guidance through uncertain times. Second, these established institutions would become the logistical backbone of local relief efforts. Both of these functions reveal how integral local institutions like churches were to building wartime nationalism.

The prominent role of religion and religious institutions should come as no surprise when viewed in the context of the era. The first half of the nineteenth century witnessed a tremendous growth in membership of organized religion, from one in fifteen Americans to one out of every seven. By the time of the Civil War, between one fifth and one third of its people were church members, making the United States, in the words of historian Philip Shaw Paludan, “the most populous and powerful Christian nation” in the world.\textsuperscript{87}

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\item \textsuperscript{86} NHS, 6/27/61.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Paludan, \textit{A People's Contest}, 339.
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Historian Mark Noll contends that, although the United States was not a “uniquely religious” country at mid-century, it was “by almost any standard of comparisons, a remarkably religious society.” And it is through these comparisons that one gets a sense of the pervasive presence religion had in the everyday lives of Civil War Americans. Noll claims that while two thirds of Americans today are church members, the “rate of adherence,” or regular participation in church activities, is far less, perhaps as low as 50 percent. He believes that in 1860 the number of people engaged in church activity was “probably double the rate of membership.” Thus, if one third of Americans were church members in 1860, that means a majority had regular contact with the church throughout their lives. So, in a day when the federal government held far less influence in the everyday lives of Americans, the local church loomed large in the eyes of local communities as a legitimate source of strength and guidance.

Mid-nineteenth century American nationalism was infused with a sense of spiritual purpose, and religion was, in fact, intertwined with many Americans’ perception of their country. As historian Melinda Lawson explains, “Since the mid –seventeenth century, Americans had embraced the idea of an elect nation: God had chosen America, with its unique origins, commitments to liberty, and material prosperity, to usher in a New World.” She states that over time “the blending of the secular and the sacred in religious and political tracts became commonplace.”

Local Keene religious leaders were active and visible in early war efforts. Every wartime mass gathering and public meeting described above included a prayer or blessing from one of the

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89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 12-13.
town’s clergymen. As groups of recruits departed for the front a minister was present at the train depot to bless them in the name of the cause. Ministers also adapted their weekly sermons to meet the new conditions of the war. And these messages expanded beyond religious themes to include secular issues that directly addressed the needs of the war. During a service in May 1861, for example, Keene Unitarian minister Reverend William Orne White gave “a very ardent and eloquent discourse” to “a very attentive audience” that emphasized the importance of “the religious morals as well as [the] intellectual culture of the youth of our country.” He claimed that during these precarious times “the state of the country not only demanded this for the future happiness and prosperity in making good men and women of the boys and girls of these days, but persevering industry should be the practice of all while so many are called to act in defence of country, and homes threatened to be broken up- and who will need our support while enlisted for our peace and safety.” What is significant about this message is that came from a minister, a man to whom people were accustomed to turning for guidance. This early wartime plea, which emphasized morality and industry, also helped prepare the residents for the sacrifices soon to come. By incorporating these secular issues with religious ones, these weekly homilies could now serve a dual purpose. And the above example demonstrates how the town’s congregations, with their respective “attentive audiences,” could now be used for fostering wartime solidarity and support.

For many Americans, the blending of the spiritual and the secular was in accordance with their beliefs about their nation. As George Rable explains, “Civil religion in America had developed as a set of beliefs about the relationship between God and the nation that emphasized

\[92\] Harriet Elliot to James, May 12, 1861, Elliot Papers.
national virtue, national purpose, and national destiny.” The integral religious components of nationalism can be seen in the plans for the Keene’s first Independence Day of the war, which combined a collective religious affirmation with America’s cultural heritage, as well as a sense of martial spirit of a people at war. There was to be a “civic procession” to the First Congregational Church at the head of the town square. Here, the participants would be treated to an “invocation to the God of Battles, who has watched over us as a nation for eighty-five years.” This ceremony would be followed by “an Oration sustaining the great principles of the Declaration of Independence,” with music provided by Prof. Chauncey Wyman of Keene’s Music Institute. Here we see again the importance of the American Revolution, this time undergirded by a spiritual importance that reflected the times. It was not the Christian “Prince of Peace” but rather the “God of Battles” that had overseen the growth of the nation. Such phrasing intimated the need for aggressive action and perhaps provided a religious sanctioning of the military mobilization now being undertaken.

While not yet an official national holiday, Keene residents used Thanksgiving Day 1861 to focus their attention to the national crisis. It was also a day of religious reflection. A Union service was held at the Congregational Church on Central Square. What is noteworthy is that clergy from the Methodist and Baptist churches joined clergy of the Congregational Church for the service. Thus three of the town’s religious societies united in the name of nationalism. On this day of thanksgiving, seven months into a national civil war, the clergymen looked to the Bible for appropriate words. Among the noted sermons that day was that of Rev. Guernsey of the Methodist Church who read from Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians:

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93 George Rable, God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 3.
Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

One witness reported that the sermon was “well received” by the congregation and that through Guernsey’s plea, “due quietude in trials, especially our present national troubles, prayerfulness, and thanksgiving were impressively urged.” The minister’s words may have been viewed so favorably due to the changing conditions of the war. The confident optimism of the spring and summer was now being tested as the war entered its eighth month. The Union army had suffered a series of setbacks, most significantly the disastrous defeat at the Battle of Bull Run in June, which had shattered hopes for a quick and decisive conflict. Northerners now faced an increasingly uncertain future as thousands of men swelled the ranks and headed south to face the enemy. The biblical message urged parishioners to let go of their anxieties and to put their trust solely in God.

Two blocks to the south that same day, members of the Unitarian Church were also meeting. Here Rev. William White preached a sermon from Job 37:16 “Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds?” The passage speaks to the omnipotence of God and the ultimate perfection of His knowledge, a divine Providence which controlled all things that were beyond human understanding. Here in the North at this time, following recent Union disasters at Bull Run and Ball’s Bluff, many people were turning increasingly to the notion of Providence for strength and comfort. Many Americans of this generation, according to historian George Rable, “shared a providential outlook on life” in which God’s will determined events both large and

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94 NHS, 12/5/61.
small. So it was with a natural ease people turned to this concept for comfort in these uncertain times, and thus religion offered “consolation, if not understanding.” Providence helped sustain morale as the war continued, particularly as Northern hopes for success remained frustratingly unfulfilled.

The local churches were also natural conduits for garnering resources and facilitating organization. In May, when the first group of Keene women gathered to provide bandages and supplies for the soldiers, it was the home of Reverend Edward Renouf, rector of St. James Church, that they met. When the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society was formed in June it was “under the supervision of eleven directors, chosen from the various religious societies in our town.” And by July the Soldiers’ Aid Society had set up headquarters in the basement of the First Congregational Church, where a large room afforded plenty of space for the growing organization’s benevolent activities. Churches were logical places to conduct wartime benevolent activity, as they were not just places of worship but of action. Many of the reform movements of the antebellum period had been motivated by, and centered around, religious institutions. And by the Civil War “voluntarism” had become one of the “hallmarks of religious practice” in America. Thus, after Fort Sumter it was this tradition of voluntarism associated with religious institutions that facilitated the transition to wartime support efforts.

The First Congregational Church became the regular meeting place for the women of the Soldiers’ Aid Society, and that fall the group scheduled weekly gatherings here that included men as well. And on Thanksgiving morning 1861 residents were asked to leave donations of

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95 Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples*, 1.
96 Ibid., 5.
97 NHS, 6/20/61.
98 Rable, *God’s Almost Chosen Peoples*, 3.
food at the church between 9 and 10 o’clock a.m. for the men of the 6th New Hampshire who
were training nearby. It was explained that a committee would collect the donations at the
church and then forward them to the local encampment.99

Originally constructed in 1788 the meetinghouse of the First Congregational Church was
an extremely important structure to the community, blending both secular and spiritual
significance. Located at the center of town overlooking Central Square, the large building was in
many ways the face of the community itself. With its newly added ornate facade and 130’
steeple the impressive edifice naturally drew the eye of visitors as they entered the square
(Illustration 2-2).

99 NHS, 11/21/61.
Until 1826 the building had been owned by the town of Keene, with the pastor’s salary provided by town funds. That year, however, the building was officially transferred to the Congregation, marking a separation between church and state. However, as one historian of Keene’s Congregational Church notes, “Despite official disestablishment, the power of habit and
tradition made the meeting house still, in a measure, a symbol and an instrument of the whole community."

Local relief efforts were dependent on effective organization. Meetings needed to be planned, funds raised, networks established, records kept, and work delegated. Keene’s prewar religious institutions had provided valuable experience in the “business” of organizing. In 1829, for example, members of the First Congregational Church had incorporated what was known as the First Congregational Church Fund, which had a board of trustees that oversaw financial matters. Also, in 1857, twenty women of the church formed the Home Circle association “for the purpose of aiding home missions.” The women adopted a constitution, elected a cadre of female officers consisting of a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, and opened a bank account. In their first year they more than doubled their membership.

The Keene Bible Society was another notable religious association. This particular group is a good example of the connection between local, state, and federal organizations that existed before the Civil War. This primarily female association had been established in 1827 as a local auxiliary to the New Hampshire Bible Society, which, in turn, operated under the direction of the national American Bible Society, established since 1816. The goal of the organization was to distribute bibles to those who could not afford them. The town of Keene was divided up into several districts with an agent assigned to each district. The aim was to supply every family and “every child that was able to read with a Testament.” The Keene Bible Society also provided testaments for every room of the local jail as well the two hotels in town. (A New York newspaper claimed that the idea of supplying hotels with bibles, still practiced today, actually

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100 David Proper, *History of the First Congregational Church* (Keene, NH: Sentinel Printing Company, 1973), 76.
101 Ibid., 108.
originated with the women of Keene during this time.) Thus, in an extraordinarily efficient manner this national organization was able to address the needs of each individual within the small local community.¹⁰²

By 1858 the Keene Bible Society boasted 568 members drawn from all religious denominations in town. In 1861 this organization also adapted to meet the needs of the war. That year it supplied bibles to 98 local recruits, which they carried with them as a personal connection to home. This connection was twofold. First, as the men marched off into the uncertainties of war, they would have immediate access to comforting Biblical passages, ones that many of them had heard in their hometown churches. And second, the Bibles were a physical connection to home, a gift from people of the community and a reminder of friends and family who would keep them in their thoughts and prayers.

Thus when the war began the process of building Northern nationalism benefitted from Keene residents’ prewar affiliations with their churches. Experience in successful organizing and existing networks aided wartime efforts. And religious institutions would continue to be a cornerstone of local support throughout the conflict.

**Newspapers**

Benedict Anderson attributes the rise of print capitalism as one of the most important elements of modern nationalism. Newspapers specifically enabled readers across disparate parts of a country to connect with one another in a “mass ceremony” of daily or weekly newspaper reading. Anderson explains that each individual reader “is well aware that the ceremony he

¹⁰² Ibid., 69-70.
performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose
existence his confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion.”103 And as historian
Adam Smith explains, “Newspapers were the prime medium of political communication in mid-
nineteenth century America. By 1860 there were 4,051 newspapers in the United States, almost
all of which reported political speeches verbatim and editorialized on issues of the day.” In
addition “a local newspaper editor was typically an influential figure in his local
community…”104 With this powerful concept in mind, we now turn to the print media of Keene,
New Hampshire.

In 1861, Keene boasted two weekly newspapers, the New Hampshire Sentinel and the
Cheshire Republican. Along with furnishing the latest local, national, and world news, the local
media served three important functions during the war. First, as Benedict Anderson explains
above, the newspapers provided common bond between the people of Keene and millions of
fellow Americans who were reading the news almost simultaneously across the country.
Second, editors would actively attempt to shape public sentiment. And finally, they would
facilitate communication and organization on the local level, publishing, free of charge, public
announcements for such things as meetings, rallies, and other specific needs.105

As historian Jeffrey Pasley explains, in nineteenth century America “the newspaper press
was the political system’s central institution.” In contrast to today’s journalism, where
objectivity is the stated goal, nineteenth century “newspapers and their editors were purposeful
actors in the political process linking parties, voters, and the government together and pursuing

103 Anderson, Imagined Communities, 35.
specific political goals.”


unite the community. It had required a “bloody war of seven years” to ultimately achieve the aspirations espoused in the Declaration of Independence, Hale reminded his readers. And now, we had become “one of the most prosperous and powerful nations in the world, possessing a moral and political influence hardly secured to any kingdom or empire in all Christendom.”

Hale framed the significance of the United States not only in local and national terms but, in his view, its relevance to the world:

Wherever the ensign of our republic waves, there an American citizen is respected and protected – whether in the more civilized nations of Europe, or in the semi-civilized dominions of China or Japan, or on the more barbarous shores of Africa – the stars and stripes are a sure defence. This for years has been our proud boast, and every true American heart has swelled with a proud patriotism as he has contemplated our history.

But now, on this anniversary of the nation’s founding “our hearts are oppressed with grief as they never have been oppressed before. A cloud now hangs over us such as never before darkened our sky.” Hale exhorted readers not to despair. For world history shows that all great nations have endured their own “bloody civil wars.” Among them were “France, England, Russia, Prussia, Austria and Spain, to say nothing of the smaller nationalities of Europe and the larger ones of Asia.” Not only did these nations survive these conflicts but had, in fact, emerged “all the better and more powerful.”

As a country that has “prospered as perhaps no other nation has prospered before us” Hale stated that “our day of trial has now come” and that the United States must, and would, prevail in this historical rite of passage, “which all the great monarchies have met and mastered.” He assured the people that across the country “there is not a truly enlightened mind” that “does
not believe it to be our duty, and that we have the ability to crush the rebellion that threatens to overthrow it.” To steel the confidence of the people he claimed that

no government on earth ever struggled against an attempt to overthrow it with more moral force, or more physical resources, than we. Never was a revolt so causeless, and never did justice and humanity cry so loud for its suppression. There is not in our mind a shadow of a doubt that this war will terminate in complete triumph for our glorious CONSTITUTION.

The impassioned editorialist concluded with a severe admonition to those who doubted the Union cause. Those people who said “subduing the South” was impossible or that “hesitate about supporting the war,” he declared, “are neither true to their own interests, to themselves, and are unworthy of the name AMERICANS.”

Included among those who may harbor “traitorous” sentiments, according to Thomas Hale, were supporters of the rival newspaper the Cheshire Republican, which, despite its name, was actually the paper of the Democratic Party. Competitive rivalry between these two Keene newspapers can be traced back to a time when the Sentinel was a supporter of the now defunct Whig Party. The intensity of this political rivalry can be seen in the actions of these press men during the 1852 political campaign. Upon seeing a large flag inscribed with the names of the Whig candidates floating atop the New Hampshire Sentinel office, the Cheshire Republican employees, whose office was across the street in the square, hoisted an even larger flag bearing Democratic candidate Franklin Pierce’s name. Not to be outdone the Sentinel raised their flag to the top of a 30’ flagpole, to which the Republican erected an 80’ foot spruce tree bearing “the largest flag ever seen in Keene.”

109 KHC, Upper Ashuelot, 84.
The Sentinel men refused to concede, however. They cut down a 100’ tree in a neighboring town, painted it, and attached a gold eagle finial to its top. They then transported it nearly ten miles to the center of town, cut a hole in the roof of their office building and fastened the massive pole. To the top of this staff they raised a banner measuring 30’ by 50’ trailed by a streamer 100’ long. One witness claimed that on windy days “the giant flag snapped with the sound of a rifle that could be heard at some distance.” And while the Whigs lost the election that year, this anecdote illustrates the lengths to which these newspapermen would go in support of their respective parties.

In August 1861, the Sentinel editor published a highly accusatory piece aimed directly at Keene’s Democrat weekly The Cheshire Republican. Just weeks earlier, the New York Herald had produced a list of what they considered “Northern rebel newspapers.” Sentinel editor Thomas Hale proclaimed that the Democratic Cheshire Republican should have been included on the list. The Republican then responded by accusing the Sentinel of using the war as an excuse to cripple its rival newspaper financially by “inciting a mob” to destroy the Republican offices on the town square. In fact, such malicious destruction had just occurred to Democratic newspapers in Concord, New Hampshire, and Bangor, Maine. Hale cited the fact that, while it was true that these two Democrat papers had been destroyed in response to treasonous comments, another Democrat paper in Bangor had actually doubled its subscription “because it has given its unconditional support to the war.” Hale urged the Cheshire Republican to do the same.

\[110\] Ibid.
\[111\] NHS, 8/8/61.
Historian Melinda Lawson explains that when the war began in April 1861, there followed a suspension of partisan bickering, which had become central to antebellum political culture. “Republicans and Democrats alike now urged Northerners to set party aside and rally behind their imperiled Union.”¹¹² This temporary “truce” was certainly evident in the public speeches given at Keene’s war rallies in early 1861. However, within three months of the firing of Fort Sumter, the first fissures in Keene’s two-party solidarity were seen in the local press, whose prewar antagonism had proven resilient to the surge of united nationalism following the outbreak of war. Nationally, the rift would continue to deepen over the next four years as the federal government’s expanding power was continually debated and party loyalty became increasingly tied to national loyalty. However, the political divisions in Keene, New Hampshire, would not be as caustic as in other Northern, and even New Hampshire towns as the community was largely pro-Republican. In fact, the reputation of the town as a Republican stronghold had even gained the attention of Abraham Lincoln during his 1860 presidential election bid. In March of that year, when trying to garner the support of New England, he wrote to a fellow Republican in Hartford, Connecticut asking, “Will you please try to get Mr. Greeley or Gen. Nye or some good man to go and speak at Keene, N.H., next Friday evening? I promised to have it done of possible and I will be much obliged if it can be.”¹¹³ In October 1860 a nighttime rally by the Lincoln and Hamlin Wide Awake Club saw a parade of one thousand members, drawn from Keene and surrounding communities, march through the streets of the town. In November, Keene voters cast 635 votes for Abraham Lincoln while 244 voted for the Democrat Stephen Douglas.¹¹⁴ With such a solid Republican majority in Keene, the *New Hampshire Sentinel* enjoyed a wide

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¹¹² Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, 70.
¹¹⁴ Ibid.
readership and the paper proved to be a vital advocate for the Lincoln administration on the local level. This advocacy would become increasingly important to sustaining support as the national government’s power expanded throughout the war. As the war escalated and political divisions emerged, the Democratic Cheshire Republican newspaper would become increasingly more critical of the Lincoln Administration’s policies and by mid-war could even by seen as an obstacle to building successful wartime nationalism. The Republican New Hampshire Sentinel would continually fight to maintain faith among core Republicans and eventually broaden their appeal to Democrats as well. With the fate of the nation at stake the war was a genuine crisis and nothing was left to chance, and the Sentinel would begin to stress that loyalty to the federal government superseded loyalty to party.

Women’s Organizations

The news of Sumter spurred many of the women of Keene into immediate action. On Thursday April 25, 1861, the local Republican newspaper the New Hampshire Sentinel reported that the women of the town had spent the past week “actively and patriotically” at work “preparing shirts, flannels, bandages, &c. for the soldiers.” Likewise the Democratic Cheshire Republican proclaimed, “The ladies of the village also have caught the prevailing patriotism, and some of them have already met for the purpose of preparing lint, bandages, and clothing for the benefit of the soldiers.” As the men gave political speeches, mobilized, and began recruiting, the women fulfilled their duty as well.

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115 This study primarily focuses on the white middle and upper class women of Keene, who assumed leadership roles in relief efforts. These women were often members of the community’s prominent families.
116 NHS, 4/25/61
117 CR, 4/24/61.
The role of women in the Civil War grew out of the legacy of the American Revolution as well. Nina Silber explains that during the War for Independence women exhibited a patriotism that “sprang from a domestic focus.” After the war “republican theorists enshrined this model of female patriotism.” Successful republics needed a virtuous populace. Thus all women had a collective role known as “republican motherhood” in which they were responsible for raising the next generation of young male Americans as “wise republican citizens.” Proponents of this theory could point to George Washington’s mother Mary as the ultimate model, claiming “mothers were crucial influences” in rearing strong virtuous leaders and that “the nation could not do without their service.”

Thus, while the Civil War brought new demands to a generation that had little experience in war, the concept of “female patriotism” was a definable principle with the “founding mothers” acting as clear role models. Women were expected to provide for the material comforts of their “sons” who would leave home to fight on the battlefield. So with the outbreak of war the early actions of women were yet another example of drawing on well-entrenched traditions from the Revolution.

The role of these white Northern women in the Civil War can also be seen in the broader context of American society. The introduction of the factory system to America had brought about dramatic social changes to the roles of men and women. As the economic means of production shifted from homes to factories, men increasingly became associated with this “public sphere,” which included “politics, law and business.” At the same time the private

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“sphere” of the home became the domain of women, whose responsibilities included
“maintenance of family stability, protection of traditional values, and advancement of children’s
welfare.”

But this concept of a “women’s sphere” did not prove to be an entirely rigid barrier to the
public world. On the contrary, the myriad benevolent and reform associations that emerged in
the decades before the Civil War involved the participation and leadership of thousands of
American women. These activities, which, according to historians G.J. Barker-Benfield and
Catherine Clinton, “could be made to square with women’s ‘primary function’ as a maternal
nurturer, guardian of those who needed special care,” allowed many women to exert their
influence in the public realm. By the time of the Civil War this experience in organizing,
coupled with a legacy of wartime “domestic patriotism,” helped facilitate the initial efforts of
Keene’s women during the first months of the conflict.

The first collective efforts by the women of Keene were impromptu affairs, which
utilized a wide variety of existing local institutions in a collaborative effort. As mentioned
above, on May 2, 1861, a group of sixty women met on short notice at the Rectory of St James
Church to make bandages for the newly formed 2nd New Hampshire Regiment. A second
meeting was called for and held at the Town Hall to complete the work already begun. For the
sake of efficiency, Lieut. Col. Fiske of the 2nd New Hampshire was asked what specific items
were needed by his men, and it was decided that flannel drawers were most in demand. The
local business of Faulkner & Colony provided flannel, which the newspaper described as “of a
very nice quality,” and the following day work began in earnest. This third meeting was held at

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121 Ibid., 143.
the Music Hall, “kindly tendered for the use of the ladies” by Mr. George Richards, local businessman and owner of the large brick building facing Central Square in which the hall was housed. Several Keene men aided the women in the cutting of the heavy material and sixty-seven pairs of flannel drawers were produced.  

This Music Hall meeting was also important for another reason. Efforts up to this point had been primarily “carried on upon individual responsibility” with no formal managerial or logistical structure. But now a committee of eight women was formed to oversee the work process. It was a harbinger of what was to come, and a hint of the enormous web of organization that was about to be created by the women of Keene in support of the war.

Following the Music Hall meeting fifty-seven more pairs of flannel pants were made and distributed to the men of the 2nd New Hampshire. Along with the pants were handkerchiefs and bags “containing every article that feminine heads could imagine a soldier could want,” including “needles, pins, thread, wax, soap, tape, [and] sticking and coat plaster.” The local school girls “showed their interest in the cause” in the form of pin cushions made especially for the men.  

The editor of the New Hampshire Sentinel publicly lauded these early actions of Keene’s women. “The patriotism of the Ladies is never questioned,” he declared. “At this perilous time they abound in brave deeds.” Writing from Portsmouth two months later, a soldier of the 2nd New Hampshire Volunteers would also frame these initial acts of Keene women in similar terms. On behalf of his entire company he expressed his “heartfelt thanks to the ladies of Keene and

122 NHS, 5/9/61.  
123 Ibid.  
124 Ibid.  
125 Ibid.
vicinity…for the many manifestations of their unselfish generosity and patriotism.”

Acknowledgment even came direct from the governor of New Hampshire. In late April a letter arrived from the Adjutant General’s Office in Concord addressed to “the Ladies of Keene.” Writing on behalf of “His Excellency the Governor,” Adjutant General Joseph Abbot acknowledged the receipt of a package of bandages and compresses that had been sent to the state capitol. Abbott proclaimed, “With God and the Ladies with us the honor of the Stars and Stripes will be sustained.”126 And in late 1861 the actions of the women in support of the war would again be publicly lauded. The New Hampshire Sentinel proclaimed that the women of the Soldiers Aid Society “certainly deserve a commendatory notice. Their persevering exertions in manufacturing articles of clothing for the comfort of our soldiers is worthy of all praise.” The writer urged the public, “Let others in like manner encourage the ladies who so successfully ‘do up’ matters of this nature, both in war and peace.”127

Throughout 1861 there were repeated efforts by men to publicly acknowledge women’s actions. Nina Silber explains that this overt praise for women’s efforts was common throughout the nation both North and South in 1861. Male citizens were “pleased to see women engaged in the traditional patriotic work of humbly supporting men’s military efforts.”128 But it is interesting to note that the efforts of the local women were deemed not only commendable but “brave” as well, and these public plaudits may reveal something deeper. Perhaps the men of the community saw women’s participation, not as a tangential element of mobilization, but as truly

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126 NHS, 4/25/61.
127 NHS, 12/5/61.
128 Nina Silber, Gender & the Sectional Conflict (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 43.
vital to war effort. By publicly praising the women of the community they could establish a true sense of inclusion and encouragement.

In Keene public recognition of women’s contributions had been made before. During the town’s centennial celebration in 1853 the committee officially acknowledged “The Ladies of Keene.” One of the toasts claimed, “The first census showed their superiority in numbers, and our whole history bears testimony to the influence of their virtues and graces.” The committee’s president then toasted “the memory of Miss Catherine Fisk,” who had been an influential teacher and promoter of public education in the community.\textsuperscript{129}

But the war brought new challenges. In a society where women were denied the right to vote, could not enlist in the army, and were rarely seen as public speakers, how were they to express their duty to the nation? As the men of the town outwardly showed their support for the cause in meetings and recruitment, the women of the town took pragmatic action as well. In the model of efficient organization they identified specific needs, coordinated volunteers, and committed themselves to the work of supplying what was required.

And while the initial actions of these women were aimed at providing for local New Hampshire soldiers, men that these women often knew or were even related to, from the start these women viewed their efforts as part of a much larger cause. When referring to the very first meeting of women, one member said they were acting “in service to their country.”\textsuperscript{130} One female participant explained that throughout their exertions “the ladies only wished to be told what was needed to be willing to furnish it, for the desire to do something for those brave fellows who were to fight for our government and to uphold the stars and stripes which still wave so

\textsuperscript{129} Griffin, \textit{History of Keene}, 455.  
proudly over us, was universal.”\textsuperscript{131} These sentiments reveal both a national awareness and a sense of duty. Even the wording is significant; these women were not acting for “the” country but for “their” country. By providing for their local soldiers (“our brave boys”) they were supporting the national administration (“our government”) which would uphold the legacy of the Revolution (“the Stars and Stripes which still wave so proudly over us”). This sense of national belonging would soon lead to a rapidly expanding connection between these local women and “their” nation-state.

By the middle of May, the initial reactionary surge seems to have abated somewhat. Eighteen-year-old Keene resident Hattie Johnson explained that although the war was still the “all-engrossing subject” among the people of the town she was “sorry to say that it is now nearly all talk here.” After outfitting the first group of local recruits, many people felt as if there was no more to be done for the present. This respite may have been needed, however. Hattie confessed, “Now, we have got some what cooled down, [or] not cooled but rather calmed, to my great relief for I felt so dreadfully oppressed for a few days.”\textsuperscript{132} This period of rapid industrious mobilization followed by relative calm would become a pattern throughout the war. The demand of the national crisis was not something that was always pressing on the collective consciousness of the townspeople.

At the end of May 1861 the women of Keene took action to create a more formal organization than the ad hoc one formed weeks earlier. A newspaper announcement invited “all ladies of Keene and vicinity” to attend a meeting on June 3 “if interested in joining ‘The Ladies’ Soldiers Aid Society of New Hampshire’ recently founded in Concord.”\textsuperscript{133} The association

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132} Harriet Johnson to James Elliot, May 17, 1861, Elliot Papers.
\textsuperscript{133} NHS, 5/30/61.
would be a county-based auxiliary to the state organization with headquarters in Keene. The
result of this meeting was the official founding of the Cheshire County Soldier’s Aid Society.
While the Soldiers’ Aid Society included five Keene men who served as a “Committee of
Gentlemen,” the operations were directly overseen by four female officers; two were married and
two were single. They were: Mrs. Thomas Edwards, President; Mrs. T.H. Leverett, Vice-
President; Miss Lauretta Boies, Treasurer, and Miss Mary Hale, Secretary.\footnote{Letter of Mary Hale, CCSAS Secretary, published in \textit{New Hampshire Sentinel}, 6/20/61.}

“In constituting ourselves a county society,” the SAS declared, “we simply become a
\textit{nucleus} in which the associated patriotism and benevolence of the county may centre, and
through which our aid may more effectually meet the wants for those whom it has been
formed.”\footnote{Ibid.} Word went out to every town in Cheshire County in an effort to obtain
memberships, which could be purchased for twenty-five cents. The directors explained that
there were a number of other counties in the state that were doing the same.\footnote{Ibid.} And as noted
above, although it was a local organization the founders of the Cheshire County SAS still viewed
their work as support for the national cause, which, in the spirit of the era’s nationalism, was
melded with religious purpose as well. “We ask the cooperation of our county in the great cause
nearest all our hearts, at this time, - a cause which, serving our country, we no less serve our
God.”\footnote{Ibid.}

In just six weeks, the efforts of the women of Keene had evolved from spontaneous
meetings, to a more structured town association, to a formalized county-based Society. And
once formed, the Cheshire County SAS immediately and proactively looked to connect with the
State Society based in the capitol of Concord, New Hampshire. In June, Secretary Mary Hale wrote a letter to the woman in charge of the State Soldiers’ Aid Society explaining that they had formed an organization called the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society in order to meet “the probable demands of soldiers called into actions from our State.” She wrote to ask their assistance in boosting membership. Mary Hale suggested that they call a “general meeting of ladies” in Concord, “and the appointment by them of a suitable person to procure members. All sums collected, together with the names of members of obtained, may be forwarded to the Secretary at this place (Keene), who will transmit them to the Treasurer.” She added, “We would suggest as early an attention to the subject as may be practicable.”

Thus the push to connect county efforts with the state came not from above but from below. It was the Keene-based Society that proactively sought a cooperative endeavor with the state, even going so far as to offer direction on how to facilitate expansion. Here again we see the concept of duty coupled with efficiency. The women were also constructing nationalism that connected the local community with a wider effort. With the lack of any existing national agency at this point, the Cheshire Country Soldiers’ Aid Society was attempting connect with officials of the State of New Hampshire. By doing so they hoped to maximize productivity of their relief efforts. It shows that the women of the society were not content with simply humbly supporting their local men but were instead pushing these boundaries to achieve a broader influence. The attempt to link with a larger network demonstrates a proclivity for action, knowledge of the “business” of benevolence, as well as foresight. These characteristics would help facilitate a transition to cooperating with larger national agencies in the months to come.

138 Letter of Mary Hale, CCSAS Secretary, published in New Hampshire Sentinel, 6/20/61.
Monday, October 21, 1861, marked another milestone in the evolution of the Cheshire County SAS. At a meeting in the Lecture Room of the First Congregational Church, the women decided by vote “to hold a series of weekly meetings starting Monday Oct 28.” The Society was in need of funds to purchase “‘little comforts’ for our soldiers,” so to create a more consistent stream of revenue it was voted to charge an admission fee per meeting.\(^{139}\) These upcoming meetings prompted Keene woman Harriet Elliot to inform her son that “the ladies here are very much engaged in working for the Soldiers, and they are to have a series of meetings, are to give five cts as entrance fee to be appropriated.”\(^{140}\) This decision to charge the volunteers caused a reaction of skepticism in 18-year-old Hattie Johnson, who told her friend, “Perhaps you may have heard that we are to have ‘Soldiers’ Aid Meetings’ here,” The society was to hold “one [meeting] a week to which anyone can be admitted by the payment of five cents each night!”\(^{141}\) While the introduction of a fee would certainly result in the exclusion of many of the poorer residents, it does reflect the evolving nature of nineteenth century American benevolent work, which had already been changing in the decade before the war. As Lori Ginzberg explains, “wartime benevolent work celebrated explicitly business…a glorification of the new virtues of efficiency and order. The themes that pervaded efforts at sustaining the soldiers…nationalism, discipline, centralization, and above all efficiency, became the watchwords of a new benevolence.”\(^{142}\) Benevolent work had evolved from simple, often evangelical-based charity, which was morally based, to a more corporate and scientific activity that was driven by

\(^{139}\) NHS, 10/24/61.
\(^{140}\) Harriet Elliot to James, 10/27/61, Elliot Papers.
\(^{141}\) Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 10/29/61, Elliot Papers.
efficiency. This sense of business acumen would be instrumental to meeting the unprecedented demands of supplying an army at war.

Along with the announced entrance fee was a decision to incorporate the efforts of men at these meetings. Through a newspaper announcement the women urged that, “It is expected that the ladies bring work – and that the gentlemen come prepared to entertain us with speeches, patriotic songs, and the reading of interesting articles relevant to the object which brings us together.” Harriet Elliot explained that the women “are to take our knitting” and the gentlemen “are expected to talk and entertain us with facts of interest in the same cause.”143 Thus, by working in complement with one another, the men and women of Keene hastened productivity and underscored the value of the work.

After the second week, the newspaper reported that the meetings had been “well attended and are getting very interesting.” The most recent meeting, held in the vestry of the Congregational Church “found a large gathering including a liberal representation of the rougher sex.” Lt. Col. Simon Griffin, who had just returned from the field, gave the audience an account of the 2nd New Hampshire’s experience at Bull Run. There was also music, “which, with the busy hum of the ladies knitting, reading, and chattering, made the evening lively enough.”144

The impetus for the increased activity was the establishment of Camp Brooks that November, which was located on the west side of town. The camp was the training ground for the 6th New Hampshire Volunteers, then being recruited in Keene. For two months the town

143 Harriet Elliot to James, 10/27/61, Elliot Papers.
144 NHS, 11/7/61.
assumed a military atmosphere. By November 14 it was reported that the regiment was almost full and “the camp in this town is quite lively with soldiers.”

The 6th New Hampshire was by no means a purely “local” regiment; of the one thousand recruits only 52 were actual residents of Keene. In fact, a month after their arrival, Harriet Elliot confessed that she had “not as yet seen a soldier that I know of.” Nonetheless, the presence of these men provided the women with a very real and personal connection to their work, faces they could see as they engaged in their supportive efforts.

The planned December 2, 1861 meeting of the Soldiers’ Aid Society was to be an ambitious one with a specific goal. Harriet Elliot wrote to her son, “The ladies of the town are invited to go to the town Hall tomorrow to make Haversacks – 1000 to be lined, 3 button holes to each ‘sack, of course 3000 button holes to be made.” The women were attempting to finish outfitting the men of the 6th New Hampshire who were due to embark that month. The daunting task compelled Harriet to ask, “Do you think we shall do them all tomorrow?” adding, “going to take our supper with us.” Harriet’s two young daughters were also “invited to come and partake and pay five cts” as well.

The group actually met twice that Monday, first at 2 o’clock in the Town Hall and again that evening at a 6 o’clock. The second gathering included addresses by officers of the 6th New Hampshire including Lt. Col. Simon Griffin. Thirty-one year old Keene native Rufus Atwood, a member of the 2nd New Hampshire who was home on leave, relayed “some amusing incidents from the seat of war” about his company, which was now encamped on the lower Potomac.

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145 NHS, 11/14/61.
146 Griffin History of Keene, 499-501.
147 Harriet Elliot to James, 12/1/61, Elliot Papers.
148 Ibid.
Rev. Edward Renouf of St. James Church also spoke along with local businessmen John Prentiss and George Richards. To add to the profits from the five cents admission fee an anonymous donor contributed $3.00 and The Neptune Fire Engine Company gave “a generous donation of $20.18.”

The support for the 6th New Hampshire went beyond providing clothing and accoutrements. On Thanksgiving Day the women of Keene travelled to the nearby encampment to deliver food to the men. Harriet Elliot reported that “many ladies visited the camp on that day” and found the men dressed in their newly issued uniforms. “Turkey, chickens, pies, puddings, and butter was sent in great abundance to the Camp.” Elliot went on to claim that about seventy soldiers attended services that Sunday at the Unitarian Church in Keene. However, she was “sorry to hear that a great many were very drunk” the previous night as they celebrated the first day of a week-long furlough. Colonel Griffin had warned the local establishments that had sold liquor to the men, and Harriet claimed that the local bar owners “will get their deserts if they are so cruel to the poor weak soldiers again.”

The embarkation of the 6th New Hampshire on Christmas Day 1861 marked a turning point for the women of Keene and for the entire community. For the next three years the town would be largely removed from a sense of such a formidable military presence. With these face to face connections missing, the women would come to rely more on abstract meanings of cause and country to motivate their efforts.

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149 NHS, 12/5/61.
150 Ibid.
151 Harriet Elliot to James, 12/1/61, Elliot Papers.
152 Ibid.
The women of Keene were highly productive in the first year of the war, but several things remained to be seen. Would the women of Keene continue to sustain a consistent level of support? Once the local troops left for the distant front would the perceptions of their efforts change? How would their actions be viewed by their male counterparts as the war progressed? And finally, would women’s wartime efforts give rise to a stronger sense of personal and political autonomy and even a new sense of allegiance to the nation-state?

**Popular Culture**

Mid-nineteenth century Keene was home to a thriving cultural community. Its rail connections, particularly to Boston, provided easy access to a variety of travelling entertainments. Every week residents could visit the Town Hall, Music Hall, or Central Square to hear a lecture, a concert, see a play, or experience a number of other unique amusements. Next to newspapers, the arts venues were the community’s most tangible and influential connection to the outside world. In an era before radio and television, popular culture was instrumental in creating a national awareness on the local level. Over the course of the war, arts venues, traditional community celebrations, and other elements of popular culture would be drawn upon to further enhance connections with the rest of the country and reaffirm ties with the nation’s past.

On certain occasions the community came together to celebrate traditional holidays that featured local individuals and organizations. As the first Independence Day of the war approached, the town prepared for its annual local festivities. In his study of wartime Philadelphia, historian J. Matthew Gallman explores the relationship between the Civil War and
civic rituals such as Fourth of July celebrations. He argues that the war “neither ended celebrations that had existed before the war nor created notably new forms of ritual.” He states this was so because these existing forms of community rituals “already featured military displays and glorified American nationalism.” So, as such, these parades provided an obvious and natural way to foster a martial spirit.

Keene’s Independence Day 1861 celebration began with a raucous parade through the town. Captain Tileston Barker of the 2nd New Hampshire Volunteers led the procession, which was accompanied by the military music of fife and drums. Also in the parade was a company known as the “Ancients and the Horribles.” This group represented a unique New England tradition, a satirical play on words of the “Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company” of Massachusetts, which dated back to the seventeenth century. The Ancients and the Horribles poked fun at the military, as well as political and community officials. Their presence in the parade, however, “disgusted some of the more sensitive, who thought the time a little inopportune” for such frivolous antics, which, in fact, mocked the military.

The contrast between Captain Barker and the comical troupe is noteworthy as they represented two very different perspectives, and the negative reaction to the Ancients and Horribles by many of the townspeople may reflect a rapidly shifting view toward the military. No longer was the army a somewhat vague and distant entity from the nation’s past which could be lampooned. The mobilization of the past few weeks had seen many of Keene’s own sons pick up rifles and go to war to defend the cherished ideals of Union. In just two months the war had created real and personal connections between the town and the army, and a new appreciation for

154 NHS, 7/11/61.
the importance of their sacrifice. And, as we shall see, the growing importance of the military in the public conscience would become one of the strongest connections between the local community and millions of fellow countrymen and women.

As was the case in most American cities at that time these Fourth of July festivities were not the result of any official civic effort but rather privately and independently sponsored and promoted. Following the parade a large picnic was held along the pleasant banks of the Ashuelot River about a mile north of town to which “everyone and their wife” were invited. About three hundred residents responded to the invitation and the event was reportedly a pleasant affair. The newspaper related, “The collation was good, the ice cream delicious, and the old and young were social.” The day’s events concluded with a spectacular fireworks display at the town park by a “pyrotechnist from Boston.” The Cheshire Republican newspaper reported that “on the whole, there was more of a Fourth of July last Thursday than has been common here in Keene.”

Another important community ritual was the annual Cheshire County Agricultural Fair held every September. The Cheshire County Agriculture Society, which hosted the fair, was an organization that dated back to 1816. In 1854 the town of Keene purchased 25 acres of ground just west of the village where they constructed a large exhibit hall, a 2,000 seat grand stand, and various stables and fences to accommodate the event. The annual fair included cattle shows, agricultural exhibits, and various other entertainments and was considered “a permanent and important institution” of the community.

155 NHS, 7/11/61.
156 CR, 7/10/61.
157 Griffin, History of Keene, 458.
As the scheduled dates of the 1861 fair approached one commentator confessed that the society “must be pretty plucky to persevere in times like these but, we trust it will succeed.”\(^\text{158}\)

Despite initial hesitation the fair was held as planned, and one reporter said it was “well attended but [a] poor show.”\(^\text{159}\) Just weeks later these same fairgrounds were converted into the training camp of the 6\(^{th}\) New Hampshire Volunteers dubbed “Camp Brooks,” and the large exhibit hall of the Agricultural Society was transformed into a military depot for clothing and supplies, demonstrating the adaptability of certain prewar institutions.\(^\text{160}\)

Music was another important cultural element of society in mid nineteenth-century Keene and often served as a common thread to help bind the community together. With the outbreak of war, music was an essential part of the town’s response. As demonstrated above, public war meetings always included the singing of some “patriotic” anthem that reflected a nationalistic theme. Music could help inspire other volunteer actions as well. During the December 2 Soldiers’ Aid Society meeting, for example, motivational speeches delivered by town and military officials were “interspersed with fine singing by a quartette club.”\(^\text{161}\) Religious and civic gatherings almost always included musical performances as well. Often these musical endeavors were led by 26-year-old Chauncey Wyman, the popular leader of the Cheshire County Music Institute, which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 2.

The Keene Brass Band, which was formed in 1855, was another ubiquitous group of the town’s social and civic scene.\(^\text{162}\) In 1859, The Keene Quadrille Band, an auxiliary to the Brass

\(^{158}\) NHS, 8/8/61.
\(^{159}\) Harriet Elliot to James, 9/25/61, Elliot Papers.
\(^{160}\) NHS, 11/21/61.
\(^{161}\) NHS, 12/5/61.
\(^{162}\) KHC, Upper Ashuelot, 90.
Band, was created to provide music for more formal dances and balls.\textsuperscript{163} In June 1861 the core of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} New Hampshire Regimental Band was formed by members of the Keene Brass Band who had enlisted in the service. The state of New Hampshire bought the band’s old instruments and the town used the money to purchase new ones. Local tailor merchant F.R. Beale and Co. was contracted to outfit the Keene Band with their uniforms\textsuperscript{164}.

While Keene’s entertainment venues continued to offer their usual variety of amusements throughout 1861, there were a number of programs that reflected the interest in the national conflict. In their August concert at the Town Hall the Glee Club of Yale College included a selection of “National Airs” amongst their repertoire of “College Glee, Humorous songs, Choruses, &c.”\textsuperscript{165} On November 3, noted abolitionist and friend of William Lloyd Garrison, Rev. A.T. Foss visited Keene to present a lecture at the Town Hall concerning “the ‘War’ and how to end it.”\textsuperscript{166} And a month later Mr. Charles L. Balch “who has recently returned from Europe” delivered a lecture “on his Transatlantic Travels and the American War” at Cheshire Hall.\textsuperscript{167}

But on the evening of Friday November 14, 1861, a most unique and intriguing event took place at the Universalist Church. Church members held a levee offering the “choicest refreshments of the season” along with music and dancing. But the main attraction was the opportunity to see “some fifty distinguished strangers dressed in their national costume.” Representatives from across the globe (actually actors in costume) mingled with the crowd and answered questions about their respective homelands. Members of this “rich pageant” included

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{164} NHS, 7/18/61.
\textsuperscript{165} NHS, 8/1/61.
\textsuperscript{166} NHS 10/31/61.
\textsuperscript{167} NHS, 12/5/61.
Chinese Mandarins, Turkish Nobles, Roman Knights, Napoleon III and Eugenie, Highlanders, Sachems, Nuns, Greeks, Fairies, &c.” But topping the bill was perhaps the most anticipated group of all: “C.S.A. celebrities” direct from “Secessia!” The newspaper promised that the event was sure to be “highly amusing” and that “as nothing similar was ever seen in this state no one should fail to attend,” concluding, “We advise all who desire to laugh and grow fat, to attend if a quarter can be found.”  

The play may have been a way to bring a bit of levity in a time of heightened wartime anxiety. But it also provides insight into a distinct “Northern” nationalism, one in which these New Englanders saw the rest of the country in their own image. And while the concept of “Union” was sacred, the vast cultural differences of Southerners allowed them to be depicted as “foreigners” within their own nation. And finally, this unique event was also a hint of the commercial exploitation of the “war fever” that was rapidly beginning to seep its way into Northern culture.

**Chapter Conclusion**

When the war began in 1861 the men and women of Keene turned to existing institutions, organizations, and traditions in order to forge wartime nationalism. This nationalism emphasized the essential and sacred importance of Union and combined deep-seated religious values with the legacy of the Revolution. Throughout most of 1861, the efforts to foster unity and action were facilitated by two factors. First, the town’s role as a recruiting station, and later a training post,
provided a tangible and personal connection to the war effort. And second, the response to Fort Sumter was largely driven by an overwhelming enthusiasm to quickly crush the rebellion.

While there were rumblings of dissent between the town’s newspapers, the initial mobilization period was marked by a strong sense of political unity. Engendered by collective action and fueled continually by nationalistic rhetoric the people of Keene were able to meet the immediate needs of the war through local efforts in the name of the national cause. But as the war entered its next phase would these efforts be sustained? As the community’s young men began to come home dead or maimed and old political divisions began to reemerge, would the principles of Union and the Constitution have enough resonance to sustain support for the war? During the next phase of this rapidly escalating conflict Keene’s emerging wartime nationalism would be put to its first test.
Chapter 3
The Reckoning of War

The first few months of the war were marked by a belief that the conflict would be short and decisive. Men rushed to fill the ranks with an almost naïve sense of romantic patriotism, a chance to become a soldier before the fighting was over. Even Abraham Lincoln himself had hoped for a swift military victory to end the war.¹ These initial perceptions were shattered by the events of that summer, however. The turning point came on July 21, 1861, when Union forces were routed at Manassas, Virginia, resulting in a staggering 4,700 casualties on both sides. And although Keene lost none of its sons in the war’s first major battle, Bull Run demonstrated that the preservation of the Union would be far costlier than previously assumed.² As the bloody engagements of 1861 and 1862 began to take an ever-increasing physical and emotional toll on the Northern populace, the people of Keene continued to utilize existing institutions, practices, and beliefs to respond and adapt to the mounting and unprecedented challenges of the bloody conflict.

¹ According to biographer Stephen B. Oates “Lincoln’s confidence was badly shaken” by the loss at First Bull Run. “For Lincoln, for the Union at large, Bull Run was a shocking and sobering defeat. The Picture Book War was over now, and so was the naïve optimism that had prevailed in Washington since the late spring.” Stephen B. Oates, With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), 256.
² Gallman, North Fights the Civil War, 21.
Coming Together

The first winter of the war saw residents of Keene continue to take collective action to reaffirm their unity and commitment to the cause. The new year began with a show of support by the young people of Keene. The high school announced that their annual sleigh ride, which had “come to be esteemed [as] a permanent institution – an indispensable requisite- of school life,” was cancelled. In its place the students would proffer their efforts that day to making hospital clothing for the soldiers. A letter to the Sentinel explained that “everybody is proud to share the epidemic self-denial of the times. In no case has the commendable spirit shown to better advantage than in the conduct of the pupils of our High School.” The writer concluded that, although the sleigh owner would lose some of his customers that day, “Young America gains self approbation and the blessing of many ready to perish. So we think the fun and festivities meant for the occasion will scarcely be missed.”

February 22, 1862, the first commemoration of Washington’s Birthday since the war began, provided yet another forum for the residents of the town to come together in the name of nationalism. The day’s events reflected yet again an effective collaboration of community groups. The celebration also demonstrated once again how the Revolutionary generation continued to provide strength and purpose during the current national crisis.

“On short notice” handbills were produced and quickly distributed to the residents of Keene. In response, according to the Sentinel, “an immense crowd” packed the Town Hall that Saturday evening to celebrate the birth of “the Father of our country.” The turnout was so great, in fact, that a number of people could not gain entry and had to return home on this icy winter

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3 NHS, 12/31/61.
night. As he had done the previous April in Central Square, and again in September’s Union Meeting, Hon. Levi Chamberlain opened the proceedings and “offered some remarks in review of the recently transpired events in our national struggle for existence and authority.” After a prayer several other prominent men offered speeches, along with the reading of numerous passages from Washington’s Farewell Address.⁴

Among the speakers that evening was John Prentiss, one of the town’s oldest and most revered citizens. Born in 1778 in Reading, Massachusetts, Prentiss moved to Keene in 1799 where, at the age of twenty-one, he established The New Hampshire Sentinel newspaper. As editor he was directly involved with the events of the town as it grew and evolved. Prentiss was an active and influential town leader. He was a driving force behind local building projects and reform movements, as well as a prominent member of both the Congregational Church and the Keene Freemasonry. An ardent and active proponent of public education, his printing house published several United States History textbooks for schoolchildren.⁵

Prentiss was an active member of Keene’s civic society as well, serving as Town Clerk, Treasurer, State Senator, and Representative. He had also “travelled extensively” throughout Europe. One town historian stated plainly that “no single man, perhaps in the history of nineteenth century Keene had so great and profound an influence on his community for so long.” Another writer explained that “for more than fifty years Mr. Prentiss wielded a powerful influence in the town and county” and that “no one doubted his honesty”.⁶

⁴ NHS, 2/27/62.
⁵ Griffin, History of Keene, 637.
⁶ Ibid.
His presence provided a tangible living connection to the founding generation, a reminder of the responsibility now thrust upon the present generation to uphold the sacred principles of the Revolution, as the nation now faced its present crisis. Mr. Prentiss recounted to the crowd that “the first or earliest event he remembered was the rejoicing over the news of the ratification of peace, by which our independence as a nation was established. This was in 1783.” The newspaper reported that, at the age of eighty-four, this “venerable gentleman takes a lively interest in all passing events, which he notes with avidity” and that “probably no one keeps better posted in regard to the war movements.”

Throughout the night’s celebration the Keene Band provided musical accompaniment for the local glee club under the direction of its leader, 26-year-old Chauncey Wyman. To complete this winter evening’s spectacle in the crowded gas-lit hall, “thirty-four young girls, representing the states of the Union sang in chorus of the Star Spangled Banner, each cantatrice holding and waving a miniature flag.” One participant proclaimed that “the whole demonstration was highly creditable to the loyalty and patriotism of the community.”

The Washington’s Birthday celebration demonstrated the adaptability of a number of traditions and institutions that constituted Keene’s localized nationalism. The Town Hall provided an effective venue for the collective effort (although in this case it proved too small). In short order the meeting coalesced and town members fulfilled their respective roles. Prominent leaders occupied the speakers’ platform above the crowd of people young and old, male and female. John Prentiss provided the citizens with their own living link to the Revolution and the importance of the founders’ ideology. The town’s musical organizations combined

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7 NHS, 2/27/62.
8 Ibid.
efforts to give the gathering a patriotic air, particularly as the building reverberated with the communal singing of the Star Spangled Banner, whose lyrics may have taken on deeper meaning as they recounted the story of how the Union survived an earlier national crisis. And the local paper published a detailed account of the celebration, providing information to those who could not attend and underscoring the evening’s central theme of tying the local community to the “nation.”

The end result of the holiday celebration, which looked to the past to the bolster action for the future, was a reaffirmation of the importance of maintaining the Union. War was (and is) a trial of personal stamina and will. In order to cope with painful loss and sacrifice of loved ones, there had to be a worthwhile goal, and the legacy of the Revolution provided that profound sense of purpose. The evening’s celebration instilled a sense of obligation to sustain the Union, to take action so that the founders’ dream of the republic did not die under their stewardship. The war would require the people of Keene to make sacrifices, just as earlier generations had done to establish the freedoms they now enjoyed.

The evening’s festivities were clearly designed to evoke an emotional response. Perhaps most indicative of this effort was the depiction of the Union during the finale. The event planners could have used older people to denote the states of the Union, but they did not. Instead, each state was represented by a young girl of the community, representing the Union as young, still growing, and full of promise. In the context of the times the young girls also represented virtue, purity, and goodness, reflecting the moral integrity of America and underscoring the righteousness of the cause. It was this depiction of Union that evoked a compulsion to defend the nation at all costs, to uphold the legacy of the American Revolution as it passed from one generation to the next.
Also, the commemoration of George Washington’s birthday was a national ritual. So although this event was held locally it reaffirmed the town’s national identity, reminding the people that they were not facing this crisis alone. A reporter on the scene wrote, “Thus were the nation and the memory of its purest and greatest statesman honored, and thus, we trust, was rekindled the patriotism of our people in this greatest of our country’s perils.”

**Death Comes Home**

“I must write today to tell you about Kate… Her brother is dead. They received a telegraph message yesterday noon, announcing the sad event which they had hardly anticipated. I went up to see Kate yesterday afternoon, the poor girl was entirely overwhelmed by her first great sorrow, and so sadly changed from only the evening before when she was here full of life, and in her usual gay spirits. I should hardly have recognized her yesterday. And poor Mr. Leverett! He was there at home too, and I never saw a man so stricken and seemingly completely stunned. I am sure I should not have known him anywhere else. It is a terrible thing for a man to lose an only son, he said he hadn’t thought Frank seriously sick, nor imagined he would not get well, oh it is too sad up there, you can’t think how sad.”

Hattie Johnson’s words provide a rare and graphic look inside the home of a wartime family reeling from the immediate shock, pain, and anguish caused by the death of a loved one. Thomas Leverett, age 19, had died of disease in Kentucky while serving in the 9th New Hampshire Volunteers, leaving his parents and sister back home in Keene to come to terms with his loss.

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10 Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 10/4/63, Elliot Papers.
By mid-1862 the war had come home in the most painful of ways for an ever-growing number of Keene residents. Keene citizen Susanna Thompson reported that many of her fellow community members had been touched by death, “whose hearts have been deeply torn by the sad tidings that loved ones have fallen either in camp, by the hand of disease, or on the battlefield.” Susanna phrased the loss poetically by writing, “Heavy drops have indeed fallen upon them from the dark cloud, and they have bowed now to the pattering visitant.” 11 By the end of July 1862 eleven of the town’s men had already died while in service, and that number would soon rise substantially. 12

The nineteenth century was an era in which Americans were more accustomed to the death of loved ones. According to Drew Gilpin Faust, “Death was hardly unfamiliar to mid-nineteenth-century Americans.” A high infant mortality rate continued to be a problem, and while overall conditions had improved since the nation’s founding, “Americans of the immediate prewar era continued to be more closely acquainted with death than their twenty-first-century counterparts.” 13 And Keene was certainly no exception. For example, the town of 4000 saw the passing of 96 people in 1863 alone, 82 of whom were civilians. 14 For comparison the crude death rate for the United States in 2014 was 8.15 annual deaths per 1,000 population, a 66% decrease from Keene’s 1863 death rate. 15

But the war brought a new form of loss to the people on the home front. In her book ThisRepublic of Suffering historian Drew Gilpin Faust examines the subject of death in the American

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12 Compilation made by listings in NHS and regimental histories.
Civil War and its effect on civilians. She explains that, to the people of this period, there was an accepted Victorian ethos surrounding what she terms a “good death.” Ideally, the loved one would pass from this world at home, surrounded by family, absolved of sins, and accepted into the loving arms of God in Heaven. Standard and proscribed mourning rituals helped ease the pain of grieving, and comfort came from knowing the deceased was lovingly interred in a nearby grave site.

This concept of a “good death” is seen clearly in an account written by Keene resident Harriet Elliot, in which she describes the passing of a local woman. “Bertha Reed died this morning at 9 o’clock perfectly calm and resigned,” she relayed in a letter. “Her death was one I have heard described as beautiful, but no description could exceed the reality. Bertha’s departure [was] exhibited in loveliness and perfect composure – Biding us good bye individually, so sweetly, and with a smile she said, ‘I should like to stay longer’ but ‘I am willing to go now.’” The experience had a profound impact on Harriet, who admitted, “I am glad to have been here at this time, [for] death has lost much of its terrors for me.”

In a similar manner, one young Keene woman, Annie Wilson, described the death of one of her friends named Sarah Adams. On her deathbed “Sarah knew all of her family and bade them goodbye saying to her friend Miss Blake as she took off a ring from her finger. ‘Hetty, when I am in Heaven; you will wear this.’ …She sang the hymn beginning – ‘One more soul will be in heaven’ and then died, calmly and peacefully in perfect consciousness & happiness.” Annie’s sister Charlotte explains that at Sarah Adams’s funeral the attendees “sang a hymn which [Sarah] sang every Sabbath evening. That melted us more than anything else.”

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16 Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 10.
17 Ibid., 62.
18 Harriet Elliot to James Elliot, May 8, [year unknown], Elliot Papers.
Charlotte, the proceedings helped ease the loss of this young woman. “Music seems to me the
medium through which we approach Heaven. The shock [of Sarah’s death] was very great at
first, but as everything connected with her life and death was perfect, it has left on my mind the
most melodious effect. Her death was like the dying away of a beautiful strain of music, whose
harmony although silent to the ear yet lives on in the soul.”

But the Civil War gave rise to a new and more disturbing form of loss. The most jarring
difference was the death of loved ones so far from home. This separation between family and
the deceased opened numerous horrors that violated the accepted notion of the Good Death.
What were their last moments like? Were they alone when they died? And, perhaps the most
important question: Where were they buried? In an 1862 letter Susanna Thompson underscores
the importance of the latter issue when she writes “With some of [the family members] there are
sad longings mingled with their tears and sorrow, anxious fears concerning the last resting place
of the departed, fears which swell the tide of their grief and their inward anguish.” She then
evokes a Biblical comparison; “Words of inquiry like those uttered by Mary to the supposed
gardener often rise to their lips – ‘Oh tell me where you have laid him?’” Thompson concludes
with the hope that, in time, some closure would be reached when the regiment’s survivors
arrived home. “May the time soon come when their comrades and the much beloved chaplain of
the New Hampshire 2d, shall return home and tell over to the wife, mother, and friend of the
fallen, those things which in their inmost soul, they must long to know.”

Often times officers, chaplains, and even fellow soldiers served as surrogate “parents” to
help compensate for this unavoidable separation that came with military service. They would

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(Spring 1988): 54-5.
help allay anxieties created by a parent’s absence during the time of death. In a tribute to two Keene men who had recently died of disease one reporter wrote that the men had passed “far from home and loving and beloved parents, but tenderly watched over by their faithful chaplain and brave companions.”

Even comrades at home could help to shrink the emotional distance between family members at home and the far-off death sites of sons scattered across the country. After the passing of one of their members in December 1861, the men of Keene’s Neptune Fire Company passed a series of resolutions that included, “Whereas God, in his infinite wisdom, has removed from us by death our beloved brother fireman Jon Chadburne, and he being far away from the dear ones at home, it not only becomes us as firemen, but as friends and brothers, to tender our respects to the deceased, and to express our sympathy to the distant though near relatives.” The firemen published the resolutions in the local papers and ordered that two copies be sent to the parents of the deceased.

Each death brought additional ties between local community and the nation, reinforcing old and creating new “mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone,” as Abraham Lincoln so eloquently expressed in March 1861, before a drop of blood had been shed. In November 1863 this common sacrifice to the national cause would be reified and sanctified by the president at Gettysburg; but this process actually began much earlier, at the local level, as each individual soldier was mourned by his own community. The issue of death marks the most intimate connection between local sacrifice and the national cause, as well as the most emotionally charged. The residents of Keene

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22 NHS, 12/19/61.
collectively dealt with this new form of death by linking the loss of a community member to a higher noble purpose. Traditional institutions and associations performed complementary roles, and tributes to the deceased were often peppered with nationalistic rhetoric, praising the departed one’s ultimate sacrifice for the sacred cause of liberty and country.

The first real shock of the war came in December 1861 when two of Keene’s young men died. John Drummer and Henry White of the 2nd New Hampshire Regiment succumbed to disease in Virginia, and their bodies arrived home on December 13. Two days later, the attention of the town turned to the Congregational Church for the dual funeral of these two Keene men.23

The services, “the most solemn and interesting funeral solemnities ever witnessed in this town,”24 demonstrate the cooperative effort of numerous local institutions and organizations to both honor and sanctify the deaths of the two young men. On the day of the funeral the Congregational Church was filled to capacity, and hundreds of mourners were turned away. The handsome young Reverend Hamilton led the service accompanied by the venerated Reverend Barstow. The prayers and tributes were filled with “patriotic sentiments” that “met with a ready response in the hearts if those who heard them.” At times the crowded chamber rang with the music of the large church choir. Among the crowd that day was Susanna Thompson who wrote, “The occasion surely bore witness to the truth of the remark, ‘that the world can sit together, if at no other time, when it weeps.’”25

23 NHS, 12/26/61.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
Following the service pallbearers carried the caskets outside where a procession formed at the head of the Square. The Keene Brass Band was first in line followed by the hearses, which were escorted by Keene native Captain O.G. Dort of the 6th New Hampshire, still encamped in town. Behind the hearses carriages carried family and friends of the deceased. Members of both the Neptune and Deluge Fire Engine Companies came next “with colors draped.” And last were citizens of the town on foot. When all was ready the column stepped off to the mournful sounds of the funeral dirge played by the Keene Band.26

Those that could not attend the services were given a full recounting by a correspondent from the New Hampshire Sentinel. The newspaper reporter also used the opportunity to further connect the local deaths with sacrifice to the nation. “Among the hundreds of young men of this county who have responded to the calls of the government to go forth in defence of our imperiled liberties,” the journalist wrote, “few have done so with more alacrity, or greater enthusiasm, than Henry White and John A. Drummer Jr., - natives and residents of this town.” From the time they entered the service until they were stricken down with Typhoid, these “young patriots” had “proved themselves brave and faithful soldiers of” Company A, 2nd New Hampshire, “whose officers and men have received not only the commendation of their superior officers, but the plaudits and benedictions of their fellow citizens.” The deceased represented but “two more victims, whose blood will be required at the hands of the traitors to our country and humanity” so that the Union might be preserved.27

In May of 1862 Keene mourned the loss of Nathaniel Lane and William Taft, two more young local men. The funerals again demonstrate the combined efforts of various local

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
organizations. Nathaniel Lane’s funeral was held in the Congregational Church where “an impressive discourse was given by Rev. Hamilton.” Following the service the Keene Brass Band once again led a procession to the graveyard where the Freemasons performed the burial. The Freemasons of Keene dated back to the 18th century and in 1784 established their first charter for organization. In 1825 The Social Friends Lodge No. 42 was chartered in Keene, and it was this lodge that would one day count Nathaniel Lane as a Masonic brother.28

Once at the grave “the Masonic burial service was performed in an imposing manner” by the brothers who had gathered for the occasion. Later that week the Masons compiled an account of the services and gave it to the local press for publication. The passage included the following tribute to the deceased: “The exercises were a fitting tribute to the memory of our deceased brother, who sacrificed his life upon the altar of our common country,” once again invoking a sense of spiritual purpose of the death for the sake of “Union.”

William Taft, who fell alongside of Nathaniel Lane, had belonged to the Deluge Company of Keene’s Fire Department. In the wake of his death the Deluge Fire Company adopted a series of resolutions in honor of their comrade who “fell in the Battle of Williamsburg while fighting bravely and gallantly in defence of his country, and the honor of its flag.” The men extended their plaudits beyond Taft’s sacrifice as a soldier to include his service as a fireman as well as his personal character. “We deeply mourn the loss of one who, by his manly deportment, integrity of character, and faithfulness in the discharge of every duty devolving upon him as a fireman and a brother, endeared himself to us in no ordinary degree,” they proclaimed. With his death on the battlefield “the Company and the community have suffered a loss not

easily replaced.”29 As the Freemasons had done, the Deluge Company submitted the resolutions to be published in the local papers.

Members of both the Deluge and Neptune Fire Companies of Keene attended Taft’s funeral services and acted as pallbearers. During the services an effort was made to physically connect Taft’s body and the “nation” through the draping of a United States flag over his casket, a custom that had only recently begun in Europe during the Napoleonic Wars.30 The coffin, “covered by the flag of our country, which he laid down his life to defend, was [then] borne to the grave.”31

The Deluge Fire Company again publicly lauded a fallen comrade in 1864 when member Rufus Atwood was killed in action. Evoking Providence they claimed that “It hath pleased Infinite wisdom to again cloud our horizon by removing an efficient and worthy brother fireman.” The firemen claimed that Atwood “at the outset of our national struggle, gave himself and recently his life on our country’s altar,” once again framing his sacrifice as one to a higher cause. As members of the fire company, they would “cherish his memory,” and as “patriots, we revere our brother and friend, and would mourn with his friends, that in manhood’s prime his sun hath forever set.” And as the local community continued to experience the loss of their own members “we have need of renewed interest in quelling the foe with whom we have to deal.”32

Perhaps the most deliberate example of tying the loss of an individual to the fate of the nation came from the Congregational Church’s Rev. Barstow. While presiding over the funeral of a Keene soldier who had been killed at Vicksburg, the last Rebel stronghold on the

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29 NHS, 5/29/62.
30 Arlingtoncemetery.net
31 NHS, 6/5/62.
32 Preamble and resolutions of Deluge Fire Company No. 1, adopted Feb. 27, 1864, published in NHS 3/10/64.
Mississippi that fell in 1863, he exclaimed, “We thank Thee O God that the Confederacy is cut in two, and its back is broken, and that the Mississippi is free to bear on its bosom the produce of a mighty nation.” Thus the sacrifice of this local man had direct bearing on the course of the war itself.

Rev. William Orne White, minister of the Unitarian Church in Keene, was known throughout the community as an ardent Republican. He was “bitterly opposed to slavery” and “espoused the cause of the North with his whole heart.” In an 1862 letter he talks about the recent loss of his nephew Wilder Dwight, who had died in the army. Although written in private correspondence, his views on death were most likely echoed from the pulpit on a weekly basis to his congregation. In the letter White confessed that, while funerals were always sad occasions, when he thought of his nephew’s services “its track of light seems brighter than I can remember associating with any similar occasion.” He explained that

some purpose was accomplished by the very dying itself; it is expected that such [men] as go into the service shall take their life in their hand. Had none been willing to die for their country we should have no country worth the name. The very dying, then, becomes connected with our earthly salvation. Wilder rises before me now as our true benefactor. He has died for us, his kindred. Whatever we live to enjoy, when the strife is over, we may feel that he has, in part, laid down his life for us. You have characterized exceedingly well, ‘the heart, the mind, the eloquent voice that fitted him to serve his country.’ He has indeed shown how “he could be a tender nurse, as well as a devoted friend and a brave soldier.”

Local newspapers were also instrumental in ascribing national importance to local men’s deaths. When Silas Black, a member of Keene’s Company A, 2nd New Hampshire Volunteers

34 Eliza White, William Orne White: A Record of Ninety Years (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1917), 144.
died of disease in early 1862 the *New Hampshire Sentinel* published excerpts of a letter written by the regiment’s chaplain to the boy’s mother and sister. After assuring the grieving women that Silas had thought of them in his final moments the chaplain then testified that Black had done his duty “to the best of his ability.” He then exalted the soldier’s death as purposeful.

He with generous patriotism devoted his life to his country’s service, and he desired to do his utmost for her, in her peril. He has laid down his life in her behalf, - what more could he have done? Let his name ever be mentioned with honor for he has merited it.

The chaplain then acknowledged that it “seems peculiarly severe to have the widowed mother left without a son, and the fatherless daughter without a brother,” however Silas Black’s death was “the will of God.” The chaplain assured the grieving family that “God, I pray and trust will comfort you and his sister.”

Thus, by publishing this otherwise intimate and personal exchange between a chaplain and the family of the deceased, the *New Hampshire Sentinel* was able to transform private loss into another vehicle for connecting the community at large with the national cause. Black’s “generous patriotism” had led him to offer the ultimate sacrifice. And, in doing so he had earned perpetual gratitude of his fellow countrymen who would forever remember him “with honor.”

Following the death of local man Nathaniel Lane a tribute poem appeared in the *Sentinel*. The writer, most likely a member of Lane’s regiment, specifically intended for the poem to be published, as across the top read “For the New Hampshire Sentinel.”

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36 *NHS*, 1/23/62.
He closed his weary eye;
The patriot’s holy crown he won
A name that cannot die

Forth to the dread yet hallowed strife
The glory of the brave
Dauntless, he bore his fresh young life
His country’s life to save

No tears for thee, thou patriot soul!
No clouds, no night for thee
For thou hast reached the blessed goal
Of immortality

To those who give their hearts, their all
A willing sacrifice
And count the flowing life-tide small
Shall sweetest praises rise

They bravely live, or nobly die
Whate’er their lot may be
Whose watchword is the father’s cry
Of “Death or Liberty”

They “reap in joy” the glorious boon
Though now “in tears they sow”
Immortal life in Heaven’s “high noon”
And deathless names below

Here in this last phrase the writer used the phrasing from the Bible, Psalm 126:5 “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.” And once again we see the theme that the man’s soul would be immortal in Heaven, while his name, or memory, would live forever on earth as long as the nation survived.

What is also noteworthy about the above passage is that, not only do we see the traditions of religion and the American Revolution’s ideological legacy infused into the prose, but this

37 NHS, 6/12/62.
tribute was written specifically for publication in the local paper. And as newspapers were
integral to creating what Benedict Anderson calls an “imagined community” through shared
experience, the writer obviously saw the value in the Sentinel as the communal voice of Keene.
So by utilizing this medium he was able to turn a personal tribute into a shared experience,
building on the growing sense of individual local sacrifice to the larger national cause.

The writers of the Sentinel also produced their own tributes to fallen soldiers. After the
death of 36 year-old Major Edward Sturtevant at Fredericksburg a writer of the New Hampshire
Sentinel published a glowing tribute to the deceased Keene man. Descriptions of Sturtevant’s
character and bravery were given credibility by the inclusion of testimonials and even some
excerpts from the major’s own letters. One problem remained, however: no one had heard
Sturtevant’s last words. This problem was easily circumvented by the newspaper writer, who
claimed to know “well enough their import.” The newspaperman simply used the words of
sentimental Scottish poet Thomas Campbell to complete the narrative of Sturtevant’s heroic
sacrifice to his nation.

O heaven,” he cried, “my bleeding country save!”
Is there no hand on high to shield the brave?
Yet though destruction sweep those lovely plains,
Rise, fellow men! Our country yet remains!
By that dread name we wave the sword on high,
And swear for her to live, with her to die.

During the summer of 1862 the town of Keene was saddened by a tragic and shocking event,
extraordinarily so even in the midst of war. On Tuesday, August 13, 1862, the passenger
steamer West Point left Newport News, Virginia, bound for Aquia Creek with 279 people
aboard, including three women and a child. The following evening, as the ship plied the waters
of the Potomac River, the passengers experienced a “startling shock” as the vessel collided with
the ship the *George Peabody* travelling full speed in the opposite direction. The *West Point* sank in ten minutes in four fathoms of water a mile and a half from shore. Seventy-three persons were drowned.\(^{38}\)

Among the dead were Keene residents Mrs. Julia Dort and her six-year-old son Arthur. (Illustration 3-3) Julia had been visiting her husband Ogden, then in service with the 2\(^{nd}\) New Hampshire in Virginia.\(^{39}\) The loss of these community members posed a unique circumstance: these deaths were certainly a direct result of the war but did not occur while in service to the cause. Thus the general practice of using national sacrifice for justifying death could not be directly applied here. The answer was to, at least publicly, shift attention and laudation to Major Dort.

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\(^{38}\) *NHS*, 8/21/62.  
\(^{39}\) *Ibid.*
The tragedy “awakened all hearts the sincerest sympathy for a bereaved husband and father – the generous and gallant Major Dort,” reported the New Hampshire Sentinel in the wake of the news. Major Dort, who had lost his only daughter just a few years before, was now dealt the overwhelming loss of his wife and oldest boy. However, the Sentinel assured the community that Major Dort was bearing the grief “with the fortitude of a Christian and a Patriot” and would be returning in just “a few days to fight his country’s battles.” They hoped “God may protect him and his suffering companions, in the holiest of earthly causes.” Here we see the Julia’s death connected directly to her soldier husband Ogden (“him”), Ogden’s fellow soldiers (“his suffering companions”), and ultimately the war itself (“the holiest of earthly causes”). In a late August public war meeting community leaders officially adopted a resolution “tendering the sympathies of this community to Major Dort of the 6th Regiment, in his deep affliction, and testifying to his excellent personal character.”

While there was no public acknowledgment of Julia Dort’s attributes, a personal letter by Rev. William Orne White did include praise, albeit modest, for the deceased woman’s character. “Sunday before last I preached a commemoration sermon occasioned by the loss of Major Dort’s wife and child in the collision on the Potomac. She was a lovely woman.” Perhaps the public acknowledgement of those lost to the war, far from home, was considered a distinctly masculine notion. As such the community channeled their public outpouring of grief for Julia through her husband, while direct personal recognition of Julia’s loss was done through private means.

40 NHS, 8/21/62
41 NHS, 8/28/62. Major Dort resigned his commission in late September 1862 “on account of ill health.” (NHS, 10/2/62). Perhaps the grief of his loss was a contributing factor to his decision.
42 White, William Orne White, 152.
In the midst of the Civil War, Keene suffered the loss of another prominent civilian. In September 1863 long time Keene Unitarian Minister George Ingersoll passed away at his home of natural causes. The funeral service was a major community event. The sermon, by William Orne White, includes a number of familiar wartime themes. White begins his eulogy by tracing the deceased man’s Revolutionary War roots. Ingersoll’s father Daniel Ingersoll was a Revolutionary War veteran, who had died shortly after moving to Keene when George was just a boy. “Fifty-eight years ago last July, a boy, nine years old, might have been standing by the open grave of a soldier, in our village burying ground. Over what broken hope must his young heart have been lamenting!” However, George had fulfilled his father’s hopes by living a joyous and meaningful life in Keene. George Ingersoll had devoted his life to Christ by becoming a “soldier of the cross” and the “frustrated purpose of our Revolutionary warrior [was] so amply fulfilled in the beneficent career of his son.”43 White again emphasizes Ingersoll’s Revolutionary roots and their relevance to the current civil war by saying that those who knew him “will seem to catch the echo of the volleys fired over his father’s grave, as they rejoice to know, that in the stern times through which we too are passing, the mantle of the elder patriot fell amply upon the son.”44 Thus, the patriotic spirit of the Revolution had been passed down from father to son, and from son to the people of Keene. Soon after the funeral Rev. White had his eulogy printed in a pamphlet for the public. He added an appendix in which he again emphasizes Ingersoll’s father Daniel’s Revolutionary War service. He includes excerpts from the New Hampshire Sentinel and Boston Colombian Centinel newspapers, which attest that Major Ingersoll “entered warmly into the contest, and was a strenuous assertor and bold defender of our

44 Ibid., 12.
rights and liberties.” And “from the engagements on Bunker’s Hill, until the peace of 1783, his exertions in the defence of his country’s rights were continued and unceasing.”

One can see the symbolism in White’s description of George Ingersoll’s character when he says that the reverend was continually “turning his eyes happily into the past, and yet recalling his gaze as he bent his glance ever hopefully and earnestly upon the future.” Ingersoll’s “predominating characteristic” was his “marvelous cheerfulness.” He had suffered a number of debilitating physical conditions throughout his life, but these “burdens could not impair his cheerfulness a whit. Oh! He is a lesson in that respect, a very instructive lesson.” To the people attending the funeral that day in Keene, the message was implied; despite the heavy troubles of the Civil War the people of Keene must look to the example of Rev. Ingersoll, a descendant of the Revolution, to remain optimistic and committed to preserving the nation.

**Recruiting Drive – Summer of 1862**

Following the firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861, the initial rush to enlist saw 700,000 Northern men respond to Lincoln’s calls for volunteers. Amidst the feeling that the conflict would be short and decisive, the act of marching off to war still retained an almost romantic quality. For example, just a day after they were wed, newly enlisted Keene volunteer Henry Holton and his bride received a visit from his new unit, the Cheshire Light Guards. After a speech by the company commander, the men presented the new couple with a baby carriage as a wedding gift engraved with the inscription “Mr. & Mrs. H. M. Holton from the Cheshire Light

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Guard, April 1861.” Outside in the front yard the regimental band struck up the tune “The Girl I left Behind Me.”

Some semblance of this sense of innocence persisted into early 1862, even after reports of camp hardships had filtered back home. Upon opening a recruiting office downtown in January, an officer of the 3rd Hew Hampshire, who had just returned from South Carolina, gave “a favorable account of the condition of the troops there, and of the climate” and, so the newspaper claimed, “Most of the sickness has been caused by the soldiers’ own imprudence.” The newspaper further aided in enticing new recruits by promising that “The Sea Islands are healthy and the climate delightful…Those who would exchange the rigor of a New England winter for the mild and balmy air of the Palmetto State, and at the same time do their country good service, have an excellent opportunity” by enlisting with the 3rd New Hampshire. The writer concluded by claiming that the recruiting officer’s “own physique is a substantial argument in favor of a winter residence in Dixie.” And in February 1862 the New Hampshire Sentinel again publicly lauded local service members through the lens of unabashed “patriotism.”

A Patriotic Family – Mrs. Abigail Ruffle of Keene, has five sons and a son-in-law in the army, ready to offer their lives for the Union. We doubt if there are many families in the country that have done better than this.

But by the second summer of the war things had dramatically changed. Most recently, Maj, General George McClellan’s failure to capture Richmond, Virginia resurrected lingering

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46 NHS, 5/2/61.; In late May 1861 Holton reenlisted for three years. He died of disease back home in Keene in March 1863 (Griffin, History of Keene, 482).
47 NHS, 1/16/62.
48 NHS, 2/27/62.
doubts that the war would end soon. Old political rivalries continued to emerge, and the shocking number of dead and wounded tempered Northerner’s earlier widespread zeal for enlisting. Amidst an increasingly charged political atmosphere, in a community still coming to terms with the realities of war, came a new challenge. On July 1, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln called for the enlistment of 300,000 volunteers to suppress the rebellion. Each state was given a quota, and the states then assigned each town a quota of recruits to meet the demand.49

The response in Keene was nothing like that following Fort Sumter, but the town was not unique in this regard. Communities throughout the North witnessed a reticence of many of their men to enlist in the army. The lack of volunteers reveals what Eugene Murdock calls the “limited patriotism” of many Northern men. He claims that the “previous year’s enlistment of 700,000 represented the full, hard core of patriotic citizenry.”50

So the question was: how would the local community of Keene attempt to boost enlistments? The answer, again, was in turning to their local institutions and practices. As they had done in early 1861 the people of the town came together as a community to take action. Public “war” meetings were held in which nationalism now took on a heightened importance. In addition to these rallies, both town officials and local businesses contributed financial incentives to entice enlistees. The town’s religious communities took supportive action, and the newspapers kept the people of the area informed of all events, helping to coordinate these various efforts.

One of the hallmarks of the 1862 recruiting drive throughout the North was the introduction of generous bonuses to entice men to enlist.\textsuperscript{51} This practice was nothing new, however. In fact, the bounty system itself was an American wartime tradition, beginning with the American Revolution. Each year of the War for Independence bounties were offered by both the Continental Congress and several states, including New Hampshire, in an effort to fill the ranks of George Washington’s Continental Army. And these bounties increased in amount as the war progressed. During the War of 1812 substantial bounties were offered to new recruits and the practice was again used during the Mexican War.\textsuperscript{52}

During a town meeting in August of 1862, in response to Lincoln’s call for 300,000 volunteers, officials voted to approve a $50 bounty for each new volunteer, and a $75 bounty for those who reenlisted in existing regiments.\textsuperscript{53} A month later the town increased these bounties to $150 for three-year enlistments and $100 for nine month men. It was also voted to “provide for [the] families [of the nine month enlistments] in the same manner as the families of three year men are provided for.” To pay for the bounties the town selectmen were authorized to borrow “on the credit of the town” up to $22,000.\textsuperscript{54}

August of 1862 saw the town consumed with the recruiting drive. Keene resident Everetta Jones told her friends in Vermont, “[I] suppose with you as with us, there is but one thing thought or talked of now, and that [is] the war. Enlisting is going on very rapidly here for the last few days. Keene has not been fully awake before but it surely is now. I hope they will


\textsuperscript{52} Murdock, *Patriotism Limited*, 16-17.

\textsuperscript{53} NHS, 8/7/62.

\textsuperscript{54} NHS, 9/11/62.
raise the quota without drafting but don’t much expect it. Considerable more than fifty have enlisted from this immediate vicinity since Thursday.”

As they had done the previous year the people of Keene called for a large public meeting to inspire a spirit of solidarity. On August 21 a “War Meeting” was held at Cheshire Hall, a large hotel near the town square. The Sentinel reported that this particular meeting was “the most spirited one we have attended and the speaking altogether beyond what we are accustomed to hear at such gatherings.” The meeting featured several speakers, including regular participant Attorney William Wheeler who once again restated the cause of the war as the South’s violation of the sacred bonds of the Constitution. As was consistent with past meetings to this point, the issue of slavery was downplayed. One speaker claimed that while it was true that there had been “a few anti-slavery men of the North who had said things to irritate” Southern slaveholders, they were but “an insignificant few.” There had been nothing done to provide “even an excuse for the rebellion,” which was instead the result “of the long plotted treason of secessionists.”

One new aspect of this rally, as opposed to earlier meetings, was that there seemed to be an effort to appeal directly to the Irish residents of the community. As noted above, Keene saw its first influx of Irish during the construction of the railroad in the late 1840s. The subsequent growth of the town’s industrial factories provided ample employment opportunities, and many Irish families took up residence in nearby neighborhoods. But by the time of the war they remained a small minority. According to the 1860 census, of the 4320 residents in town, 309 were Irish, or less than 10% of the community’s total population.

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55 Everetta Jones to Friends, 8/11/62, Author collection.
56 NHS, 8/21/62.
57 NHS, 8/28/62.
58 1860 United States Census for Keene, New Hampshire.
And in Keene, like many American communities in the mid-nineteenth century, there was a social separation between native-born and immigrant residents. A scene described in a wartime letter of Hattie Johnson hints at this disparity. “Keene has been for the last six weeks trying skates and has succeeded pretty well too,” she explained,

And there [on the ice] Keene society has assembled almost daily of all (grades?) from uppertendom of [Keene]—to the little Irish boys and girls [who are] without skates but [who are] amusing themselves as best they may by sliding or drawing one another on the sled. There, if nowhere else people are equal and are more ready to acknowledge it too, for a fine skater must be admired whether his father gets his living in the Halls of Congress or in a factory or on the railroad.  

The comments of Ms. Johnson, herself a member of Keene’s upper middle class, reflect the class divisions of the small community. She contrasts the “uppertendom” of “Keene society” with the Irish children who cannot afford skates but still enjoy winter frolicking. Whether one’s father was a prominent politician or a lowly factory worker, here on the ice skating pond, “if nowhere else people are equal.”

Just days after the war began in April 1861 a “Company of Irish residents of Keene [had] paraded in streets to fife and drum [and] raised the Star and Stripes on the ‘Patch’.” From the start of the conflict there was a deliberate attempt to acknowledge Irish Americans’ distinct sense of patriotism. In May 1861 the New Hampshire Sentinel commented on the “Patriotism of our adopted citizens,” noting that one thousand Irish-born New Yorkers had recently enlisted in New York City. The newspaper claimed that Irish Americans possessed a unique brand of patriotism,

59 Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 1/25/63, Elliot Papers.
as “they know what liberty is by oppressions at home, and they will fight to the last drop of blood for the Union that shelters them in the land of their adoption.”

And now in August 1862 this appeal to the Irish of Keene was used again, but this time in a deliberate effort to fill the ranks (and Keene’s quota). One of the featured speakers at the recruiting rally was Lt. Col. John Coughlin of the 10th New Hampshire, whom the Sentinel made specifically known was “of Irish parentage.” Coughlin claimed that it was the duty of “every man who owed allegiance to the government, native and foreign born, to rally in the defense of the government and flag.” Coughlin praised the “many heroes and patriots of the Revolution, born in foreign lands, who devoted their lives to gain our independence and to establish the beneficent government under which we have prospered as no other people have ever prospered, but which traitors were now in arms to destroy.” He reminded the people of Keene that there were “large numbers of Irishmen now in the Union army, fighting to defend the government and its free institutions which so many of their own ancestors labored at the sacrifice of life to secure.”

But how accurate was this view of “Irish-American nationalism?” In his study of Civil War soldiers’ motivations James McPherson claims that there is evidence that many Irish-born Americans did, in fact, share these sentiments. “Irish-American soldiers drew some of the clearest parallels between their fight for the Union and the struggle for liberty in the old country.” In a more recent study Susannah Ural Bruce finds that there was a sense of dual allegiance when it came to national identity. She argues that Irish supported the war “when the

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60 NHS, 5/2/61.
61 NHS, 8/28/62.
62 Ibid.
Union cause supported their efforts in Ireland and America.” However, the radical steps of emancipation and the federal draft, coupled with horrendous casualties among Irish units, led to an increasingly diminished support for the war effort among Irish Americans.64

At this rally Lt. Col. John Coughlin also made mention of the “efforts of a few to discourage enlistments among our fellow Irish citizens on the ground that this is a know nothing and black republican war. Col. Coughlin characterized such men as dastards and traitors.”65 Lt. Col. Coughlin’s presence and message at the August 1862 war meeting suggest two points. First, with the urgent need to fill the town’s quota there was a direct effort to appeal to the Irish community for support. Coughlin made an effort to connect these local Keene men to the larger group of Irish brethren throughout the North who were currently serving in the Union army. There was also a deliberate attempt to broaden the scope of nationalism to include this particular group of immigrants. Coughlin made direct reference to those “foreign born heroes and patriots” of the American Revolution in an attempt to evoke a sense of kindred connection to the nation’s past, even though, in reality, there might not be one.

Second, whether the “dastards and traitors” that had tried to discourage Irish enlistments were encountered in Keene is unclear. But the fact that Coughlin specifically mentioned this in his speech is evidence that at least some Irish had demonstrated a lack of faith in the cause even before emancipation and the draft were enacted. Thus these differing views on the war and the perhaps the nation itself potentially threatened to divide the community along ethnic lines.

65 NHS, 8/28/62.
Throughout the summer of 1862 the town’s religious community also actively contributed to both reaffirming a spirit of nationalism and aiding the summer’s push for enlistments. On the Fourth of July a large gathering of Sunday School teachers and students from all around the area met at Keene to celebrate Independence Day. The railroad companies contributed to the affair by carrying passengers for “less than half [the] usual fare.” Rev. Barstow opened the festivities by offering a prayer, followed by addresses from local physician George Twitchell as well as several clergymen. The celebration included the singing of songs and a holiday meal. Upon conclusion of the festivities a procession was formed which then marched to through town to the railroad station. One witness claimed, “The procession, as it was escorted to the depot after the close of the exercises, made quite an imposing appearance – the long line of children in their neat holiday dresses, with banners floating in the breeze, marching to the music of the band, was a gratifying spectacle.”

In August Reverend Isaac Knowlton, of the Universalist Church delivered a speech to a Town Hall audience titled “War and our Duty,” which the New Hampshire Sentinel labeled as “Patriotic.” And the previous month Congregational Church minister Rev. John Hamilton had shown the ultimate commitment to the cause by enlisting in the 3rd New Hampshire Volunteers. Upon hearing the news the sixteen young men of Hamilton’s Bible Class “very quietly took possession of his parlor at 9 pm, and presented their teacher with a solid silver cream pitcher, engraved with…the names of the class as an expression of their affectionate regard for him as their pastor and instructor in spiritual things.” The newspaper account of the incident read, “The beauty and value of the gift and the spirit in which it was bestowed and received combine to

66 NHS, 7/3/62; NHS, 7/10/62.
67 NHS, 8/21/62.
make the occasion one to be remembered with pleasure and will add strength to the numerous ties which bind this beloved pastor to the people of his charge during his absence at the seat of war."\(^{68}\)

The men of Hamilton’s Bible class then submitted the text of the inscription to the *Sentinel* specifically for publication, once again transforming a private sentiment into a publicly shared experience. The inscription expressed the idea that, although they would miss their beloved mentor, they realized that a higher duty was calling. One stanza of the tribute read:

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We shall miss the – miss thee sadly,-
   But should we deny their prayer
Where would be our love of country
   Where our patriotic care
For our brave and noble hearted
   Who for us the battle dare\(^{69}\)
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So it was through their association Rev. John Hamilton that the members of the Bible school uniquely identified with the national cause. They had acknowledged that, despite the personal affinity for their mentor, they must willingly support his decision to go to war. By doing so they could demonstrate their own “love of country” and “patriotic care” for those then in service. And by purposely submitting their tribute to the newspaper for publication, the private act became one in which the whole community could benefit.

Amidst the all-consuming recruiting drive that August, the town prepared for the annual Cheshire County Musical Institute and Convention, a usually popular and highly anticipated event. The convention was a week-long gathering of prominent New England performers and local musicians. Music had been an integral part of Keene’s community fabric since the late

\(^{68}\) NHS, 7/3/62.
\(^{69}\) Ibid.
eighteenth century, and in the 1820s an official musical organization was formed, which performed the works of Handel and Haydn for the public. This society began to hold occasional conventions during which renowned musicians would come to Keene to perform. In the early 1850s the musical gathering became an annual event, and in 1852 the Cheshire County Musical Institute was formed, which hosted the yearly convention. Professional musicians from throughout the Northeast would travel to Keene to participate in the week-long event, culminating in a series of concerts, which at times included a chorus of 600 performers. When the Civil War broke out the Musical Institute was under the charge of the town’s talented young musical director Chauncey Wyman.  

But in the wake of recent tragedies, and considering the current state of the nation, there were doubts about the appropriateness of the usually joyous community celebration. The local paper confessed that “the public mind is almost entirely occupied by the war, and consequently many friends of music doubted the policy of holding a convention this year.” Keene woman Everetta Jones shared these doubts. As the date for the convention approached she told friends in a letter, “I have not known what to write about the convention that is to be next week. They made arrangements for a very nice time but the call for more troops makes it look very doubtful about their being any here to speak of. I would like to see Mary here very much but she must not anticipate much of a musical line for we think the convention will be a failure.”

What occurred during the annual event, however, was completely unexpected. The Music Convention of 1862 demonstrated how local traditions could adapt and meld with the wartime sense of national responsibility to foster an outpouring of support for the Northern

70 Griffin, History of Keene, 467-68; KHC, Upper Ashuelot, 614-15.
71 NHS, 8/18/62.
72 Everetta Jones to Mrs. Asa Davis of Chester, VT, 8/11/62, Author collection.
effort. Over two hundred singers participated in the event, and near the end of the sold out final concert on Friday evening the crowd was inspired by the playing of a patriotic song. At that point a Mr. E. Rogers of North Adams, Massachusetts was called out on stage. The North Adams man proceeded to give “a stirring account of the way they raise volunteers in that wide awake old town, the first in the United States to complete her quotas under both calls for 300,000 men.” His impassioned speech was greeted by spirited enthusiasm and “as a result the war spirit was somewhat aroused.” It was decided then and there that the town would hold a war meeting the following night. One witness claimed that, despite initial doubts, “The feeling seemed to be that the musical convention might after all be the means of awaking us to our duty to our country.”

The following evening an “impromptu war meeting was held” at the Town Hall. The “best singers of the different choirs” from the Music Convention, led by the ubiquitous Prof. Chauncey Wyman, provided accompaniment to a series of speeches by prominent townsmen. The meeting, however, seemed to falter in its purpose of drawing recruits, and it was decided to meet again on Monday night “with a determination to have a better program – less speaking and more action- although,” admitted one witness, “the speaking was mainly good.”

Monday evening’s war meeting saw the Town Hall “filled to overflowing.” Unlike Saturday’s string of verbose speeches by a few, this night’s appeals were brief, more focused, and “at times very personal.” In response fifteen men enlisted “pledging their services to the

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73 NHS, 8/22/62.
74 NHS, 8/28/62
Government to crush the rebellion,” including two of Keene’s most admired physicians. As the hour grew late it was decided to adjourn and reconvene again the next night.⁷⁵

On Tuesday’s assembly in the Town Hall, the third in four days, the congregation voted to hold a massive public rally in the Town Square. Friday at two o’clock was the appointed time and “it is expected that all places of business will be closed.” One Keene resident relayed the sense of growing momentum that week by remarking, “The people are now pretty well awake, and hardly need a rallying note to call them together in overwhelming numbers.”⁷⁶

Thus, it was the annual Music Institute’s Convention, of which there was initial doubt about holding, which sparked a wave of public support for the war effort. The Friday concert was the impetus of three “war meetings” culminating a mass rally on the town square, and musical performers from the Convention stayed on to participate in the meetings. The officers of the Cheshire County Music Institute publicly expressed their gratitude to the public for their response and its validation of the worthiness of the annual event despite the war. “Notwithstanding our national trials, we have a gratifying evidence that the people appreciate the value of musical instruction, and we are thereby encouraged to continue our efforts for years to come.” In addition they acknowledged that the present state of affairs did have an impact on the event. “We extend our cordial sympathies to those whom we have been accustomed to greet at our yearly gatherings who are now in the service of their country, and will pray that they may soon return to us unharmed, bearing their country’s flag, with not a star effaced.”⁷⁷ The 1862 Music Convention demonstrates the ability of local institutions to adapt to the national crisis, balancing traditional community celebrations with the gravity of the current war.

⁷⁵ Ibid.
⁷⁶ Ibid.
⁷⁷ NHS, 8/28/62.
provides another example of building nationalism on the local level through locally centered institutions.

During the month of September the efforts to raise troops dominated the town. But unlike the Music Institute’s decision to proceed with their event, the Cheshire County Agricultural Society decided to cancel the annual fair, which had been scheduled for September 23 and 24. The Society explained, “The public attention is so completely absorbed by the war interest that it has been found extremely difficult to secure the popular attention to agricultural fairs, and county and state societies have very generally given up their annual exhibition.”

Overall the 1862 recruiting drive was successful. By mid-August one hundred men of Cheshire County enlisted, enough to comprise an entire company in the 9th New Hampshire Volunteers. An additional ninety-two local men enlisted in the 14th New Hampshire, which left for the front in October. The measure of success can be determined when considering the push for enlistments. That summer Lincoln called on the states to draft men into the service for three years. New Hampshire’s quota was two full regiments. Thus those men recruited in Keene comprised almost 10% of the entire state’s quota. These men were also all volunteers, sparing Keene the stigmatizing experience of state-authorized conscription.

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78 Ibid.
80 Griffin, History of Keene, 508- 514.
Relief Efforts Expand

The first winter of the war saw relief efforts strengthened between the local community and the larger national cause. In late December 1861, Mrs. Harriet Mead Abbott accepted the position of associate manager of the New England Women’s Auxiliary Association (NEWAA), an authorized branch of the United States Sanitary Commission, based in Boston. Abbott, wife of wealthy Keene resident William P. Abbott, was a member of one of Keene’s most prominent families. Harriet had direct ties to the American Revolution. Her paternal grandfather Gideon Handerson, was a Massachusetts native who fought in Capt. Noadiah Leonard’s company in the War for Independence, one of the first units to respond to the call in 1775.\(^\text{81}\) Harriet’s father, Phineas Handerson, was a child of the Revolutionary Era, born in Amherst, Massachusetts in 1778. As a young man Phineas became a successful attorney in Chesterfield, New Hampshire, before moving his entire family to Keene in 1833. Here he became an influential and respected member of the community. He was very active in politics, serving as State Senator, councilor, town agent, and president of the Cheshire County Bar before his death in 1853.\(^\text{82}\) In 1861 Harriet’s brother, Henry Clay Handerson, also of Keene, was then serving as a captain in the 3\(^{rd}\) New Hampshire Volunteers.

Harriet Abbot’s new position as associate manager was one of great responsibility that required superior administrative skills. Her initial instructions were to “exert the widest possible influence in [the NEWAA’s] behalf in your own neighborhood, and to organize the interest already existing.”\(^\text{83}\) She was to be “in constant and direct communication with the Sanitary

\(^{81}\) [http://www.geni.com/people/Gideon-Handerson/6000000010796497812; Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War: A Compilation from the Archives, Prepared and Published by the Commonwealth. Volume 7 (Boston: Wright and Potter Publishing Co, 1900), 216.

\(^{82}\) Griffin, History of Keene, 608.

Commission” and act as both liaison and public relations spokesperson for the organization, providing “any information in her power concerning its plans and its work to anyone who desire it.”

The New England Women’s Auxiliary Association later explained that, when they formed in 1861, 750 local aid societies had already been established, which were “scattered throughout New England.” Thus the work of benevolence was well underway when the Sanitary Commission began their efforts. When the Sanitary Commission was formed its purpose was two-fold: first, to “Inquire” – inspect camps for proper sanitary conditions – and second, to “Advise” – apprise government and military officials of what steps should be taken to improve conditions. As one early historian of the Sanitary Commission stated, among the initial goals of the organization were “to purchase clothing, provisions, and matters of comfort not supplied by Government regulations, to send books and newspapers to the camps, [and] to preserve a record of the services of each soldier…” At the beginning of the conflict “the intention was not to concern itself with supplying other wants of the soldier than those which, on inquiry, should turn out to be” required. And then they would simply advise the government, “acting through its appropriate channels, a suitable remedy.” However, the rapid escalation of the war resulted in the need for supplies beyond the ability of the federal government to furnish. It was necessary to turn to local aid societies, which were already established and functioning, to provide this support.

In the first official history of the United States Sanitary Commission, member Charles Stille acknowledges that “The earliest movement that was made for army relief was begun, as it

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84 NHS, 1/20/62.
85 Stille, United States Sanitary Commission, 39-40.
86 Ibid., 36-37.
is hardly necessary to say, by the women of the country.”87 Once formed in mid-1861, the United States Sanitary Commission turned to these already existing women’s local aid societies as bases of production. To understand why, it is necessary to consider the logistical challenges of the country as relief efforts began. Americans had never experienced war on such a massive scale, and the challenges of coordinating relief efforts that came with it. Rev. Lemuel Moss, who helped establish the United States Christian Commission, a similar relief organization formed that same year, describes the situation in 1861, which would also apply to the leaders of the US Sanitary Commission. “No one well understood the precise work to be done, or the methods by which it could be accomplished,” explained Moss. “There was an earnest Christian and patriotic desire [among leaders of the US Christian Commission] to be of service to the army and nation, but there was the absence of that practical knowledge which could only come through experience.” Moss claims that this challenge “exactly reflected the condition of the government and the nation. War of such magnitude and character was wholly unprecedented, and no one knew how to meet it, or manage anything connected with it.”88 There was also “a general indifference” of the public toward the US Christian Commission as “national feeling had not yet been sufficiently developed and hardened into unity of action, the solidity of systematic organization and effective co-operation was wanting alike in the army and at home.”89

Thus, with so much initial uncertainty as to the leadership and direction of these national organizations, it was natural for the Sanitary Commission to look to the thousands of small local-oriented soldiers’ aid societies then established. These local associations, operating

87 Ibid., 39.
89 Ibid., 116-17.
independently through familiar benevolent practices, would provide a solid foundation on which to build the larger national network. They would also provide the means of production, garnering supplies and funds, which could then be channeled via the Sanitary Commission. In short, the success of the US Sanitary Commission would have been impossible, or at least radically diminished, without the prior experience of local benevolent organizing. As we shall see, the combination of local community-based relief organizations and the national US Sanitary Commission was extremely effective. It also was an excellent example of how Americans could demonstrate service to the country through local efforts.

By early 1862 the plan of the US Sanitary Commission went into operation. One member of each local town was usually selected to act as the NEWAA’s (New England’s branch of the Sanitary Commission) “regular correspondent from whom we learn the state of affairs in her neighborhood and who asks of us such information as is needed there, and which we are constantly receiving from Washington. In this way any request made from Washington is circulated through the country without delay, and every sewing circle may know at once what is most needed, so that not one unneeded stitch may be set.”

The U.S. Sanitary Commission became attractive to benevolent contributors because the scale of the war had changed dramatically by this time. Again the goal was to maximize efficiency, and the Sanitary Commission offered “the safest and most satisfactory channel through which our donations can reach all our soldiers, just when and where they are most needed.” It helped eliminate “wasted time or labor or material, as has sometimes been found to be the case in our former methods of sending to special regiments – which are always liable to be

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moving from post to post and with limited means of transportation.”

In Keene the *New Hampshire Sentinel* urged cooperation from the community toward the efforts, adding presciently “as in case of a general engagement of the armies the draught upon our stores of the commission would greatly exceed their present supply.”

The Sanitary Commission fostered a coordinated national effort, which emphasized a collective effort of all Northerners and downplayed state allegiances. They claimed they could “do this work better than any State or local agency…because it is an ‘arm of Government,’ and therefore works for the whole country.” Aid was provided to those soldiers most in need. There were no distinctions made between “Maine men and Iowans, for are they not fighting for the same common cause?” These men “at their country’s call nobly merged all minor differences in one hope, one faith – Liberty and Union.”

However, it must be noted that it was the initial efforts of American women on the local level that came to influence, and eventually become infused with, the goals of the U.S. Sanitary Commission. So while still functioning on a local level, the women of Keene were becoming ever more connected to a national network and were now actively engaged with a federal government that was dependent upon their efforts. But what is important to keep in mind is that the relief efforts began on the local level. It was a grassroots system of organizing, and not a federal agency that had to educate the public on how to establish and conduct relief efforts. The impulse and ability to organize was based on prewar benevolence experience. It was the actions of thousands of local women, acting locally, that made the Sanitary Commission’s shift to relief

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91 *NHS*, 1/20/62.
92 Ibid.
possible. It was the combination of these local relief efforts in conjunction with the national network that made the Sanitary Commission so efficient so quickly.

Keene women continued to be productive into the early months of 1862. In March the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society received a letter from the N.E. Women’s Auxiliary Association in Boston thanking them for a recent donation of a box containing “75 bedsacks, &c, from Keene.” The letter claimed, “This is by far the most generous donation we have received for a long time.”

In June 1862 the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society altered their official mission statement to encompass a much broader spectrum. When the organization was originally formed in June 1861 its aim was “to furnish the soldiers of the New Hampshire regiments such articles of clothing and hospital comforts as it is beyond the power of government, because of the great pressure upon it, to supply.” A consensus of all of the Cheshire County members moved that the society’s constitution now be amended. The women voted unanimously “not to confine the labors of the Society to the New Hampshire soldiers but that the expression be for the aid and comfort of the soldiers of our army.” (emphasis added) Secretary Susanna Thompson provided an apt metaphor to explain the shift in focus. “In short when we felt that we had obeyed the apostolic injunction in caring for those of our own household, we turned our attention to a larger sphere of action.” Miss Thompson’s phrasing is insightful. First, she alludes to their work as being in accordance with the Bible, underscoring the importance of religion in the community. As we have seen earlier, religious institutions played a major role in the daily lives of the people of Keene and provided the organizational, logistical, and ideological framework for wartime

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95 NHS, 6/12/62
relief efforts. And second, the act of moving beyond “our own household” fits well with the
nineteenth century concept of the women’s sphere of influence, which began in the home and
grew concentrically larger through the work of benevolence. Thus, as Lori Ginzberg describes,
“justified as an extension of their maternal duties, women’s influence could be exerted over an
entire nation.”96 The soldiers’ aid societies provided women with a direct avenue to contribute to
the Northern war effort through traditional practices.

But this shift to a national focus was by no means surprising or revolutionary. In the
very month of their establishment in 1861 the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society published
the following statement in the local newspapers:

As the electric wires that span our cities converge from the circumference to a
common centre, so that no chord can be struck that the whole instrument does not
vibrate, so, all these gifts offered on the altar of our country and combined into a
united whole, may yet swell the grand music of – “Liberty and Union, now and
forever, ONE and inseparable”

Over our “happy valley” peace hovers, angel-like. The din of distant warfare
scarce disturbs its quiet. But they who have gone from among us, who keep
watch and ward for our dearest possessions – our brave New Hampshire “boys” –
must not, will not be forgotten.”97

This declaration by the women of the county reflects a conscious balance between local and
national allegiances. The first paragraph emphasizes the connectivity among Americans, where
the pain of war affected everyone. Offerings would be made “on the altar of our country” so that
the Union would be preserved. But within this collective effort the women also acknowledge
their “brave New Hampshire boys” who were doing their part in the national effort. It hints at

the fact that, from the very onset of the war, they viewed service to their local institutions as also contributing to the cause of the nation as a whole. Thus, altering their constitution represented no radical change in thinking, but merely reflected a broader sense of allegiance the women had always felt.

June 1862 marked the first-year anniversary of the formation of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society, and to commemorate the occasion, Society Secretary Susanna Thompson, reflected on the past year in an official report to the public. Thompson had written over three hundred letters so far to soldiers’ aid societies in neighboring communities, missives to local newspapers, as well as correspondence with the New Hampshire Soldiers’ Aid Society headquarters in Concord. The previous twelve months had seen twenty directors’ meetings along with twenty-five general meetings. These gatherings were not regularly held, however, but fluctuated with the urgency of need. “When there has seemed to be no special demand upon our efforts, there have been long intervals when it has not been thought expedient to call general meetings,” explained Susanna Thompson. But “when the claims upon us have been urgent they have followed each other in rapid succession.”

Thompson expressed her belief that in these trying times all attempts should be made to support those men now in service to the country. It required a cooperative effort by everyone on the home front, men and women alike. And she viewed this support as a requisite duty:

The thousands who have so enthusiastically responded to the call of the chief magistrate of our nation; who have gone forth to brave death in many of its cruel forms; gone to encounter hardships, weariness, cold, hunger, perils by sea and by land; privations and trials that remind one of those endured by the Apostle Paul – certainly have a claim upon the unwearied labors of every person in the North.

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98 Records of CCSAS, Historical Society of Cheshire County. This letter was also published in the NHS, 6/12/62.
99 NHS, 6/12/62.
Complementary and coordinated efforts of local groups had been instrumental to the Soldiers’ Aid Society’s success throughout the first year of the war. Miss Thompson’s acknowledgement of numerous organizations, businesses, and individuals reveals a network of communal support. She thanked those “who have so heartily and generously responded from time to time to the calls made upon their patriotism and benevolence.” Wealthy businessmen O. P. Hall, George Richards, merchants Samuel Gerould & Son, Mr. D.W. Buckminster, “and other gentlemen of this village who have in various ways given us valuable aid gratuitously” were especially noted for their support of the society.100

In mid-April 1862, when the organization’s treasury was dwindling, the women of the SAS had taken initiative by appealing directly to the public for funding. They published announcements in the local papers asking for contributions and turned to the religious organizations to act as conduits for this fundraising. And it worked. Within two weeks contributions from the congregations of the five local churches amounted to $140.00. The Unitarian Society of nearby Dublin, NH donated an additional $14.00. This financial boost enabled the organization “to resume operations, which we were obliged to suspend in consequence of an empty Treasury.”101

The Soldiers’ Aid Society repeated this tactic in September 1862 when there was a need to replenish “our nearly exhausted treasury.” It was “earnestly requested that the various religious congregations in Keene and vicinity be invited to contribute in aid of said society, on

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100 NHS, 6/12/62.
101 NHS, 5/1/62.
such early day as their respective pastors may designate.”\footnote{\textit{NHS}, 9/11/62.} And again the community responded; within a month $150.00 was raised for the Society’s operations. In both of these instances we again see local institutions and organizations (the newspaper, churches, and SAS) effectively and efficiently working together to advance the national cause.

The two weekly newspapers also received acknowledgements of gratitude for their integral role in facilitating both awareness and cooperation. The \textit{New Hampshire Sentinel} and \textit{Cheshire Republican}, mouthpieces for the Republican and Democratic parties respectively, both published all reports and notices of the Soldiers’ Aid Society for the past year free of charge. The powerful impact and importance of the media did not go unnoticed by the SAS. “We attribute not a little of the success attending our enterprise to this kindness in giving the knowledge of our aims and wants a circulation otherwise unobtainable.”\footnote{\textit{NHS}, 6/12/62.}

And the power of the press sometimes manifested itself in unintended ways and places, furthering connections to the nation. One day in 1862 the women of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society received a letter from a previously unknown woman in Illinois. “Your efforts have stimulated us to action,” the Illinoisan informed the Cheshire County members. “We have written and published an appeal to the women of Illinois – we have had a meeting at which we read from the Keene Sentinel the plan of your society, and adopted it as the foundation of ours – and in spite of all sorts of obstacles and drawbacks, we still live.” The “obstacles and drawbacks” referred to were the strong “Secession proclivities” of those around them “from which ladies were by no means exempt.”\footnote{Ibid.}
The letter from Illinois validated and reaffirmed the importance of their efforts as women. Reflecting on the message from Illinois Susanna Thompson asked, “Shall we not thank God and take courage when we know that our example has cheered and stimulated those far off sisters, whose especial privilege and duty it has been to care for our noble Illinois soldiers, [and] in whose heroic deeds and brave endurance at Donelson and Pittsburg we have a sympathizing pride?” In this case these bonds of womanhood stretched across the North and connected these two disparate communities in the name of national support. Miss Thompson considered it both a “privilege” and a “duty” to care for, not “their,” but “our” Illinois soldiers, which in turned engendered a “sympathizing pride.”

In June 1862 the editor of the *New Hampshire Sentinel* received another unexpected letter, this time from a woman in St. Louis who was the secretary of that city’s “Ladies' Union Aid Society.” The woman wanted to publicly acknowledge the receipt of twenty-five dollars from a Cheshire County woman. She wrote:

> We thank our friends for kindly remembering our sick and wounded in the Mississippi Valley – and feel greatly stimulated in our work by the aid rendered us from our friends in the East. We know you are all nobly laboring for the men of the army of the Potomac, which claims, more naturally your care and attention, and we greatly appreciate the kindness and interest so practically manifested by our Cheshire friends for the brave but suffering volunteers of our Western army.  

The Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society spawned new relief organizations not only in far away communities but at home as well. The year 1862 saw the formation of the Juvenile Soldiers’ Aid Society, which was made up of the young ladies of Keene who wished to show

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105 Ibid.
their devotion to the cause. In August The Juvenile Soldiers’ Aid Society held a large levee in the Town Hall. The event proved to be “really one of the most successful entertainments that have occurred in a long time” and raised a total of $121.00. The group decided to divide the proceeds, keeping $46.00 for local allocations and forwarding the remaining $75.00 to the Sanitary Commission in Boston. The office of the Sanitary Commission responded with a letter of acknowledgement that praised the “patriotic young ladies” of Keene for their “very generous and timely contribution.” He assured them that “every dollar” of their donation would be devoted the wounded and that “many a soldier’s faint heart and wearied frame will be encouraged” by not only the physical comforts but also by knowledge of the “warm and ready sympathy which prompted the liberal contributions.”

The formation of the Juvenile Soldiers’ Aid Society represents a broadening of the relief efforts on the local level, which also allowed the young women of Keene to more firmly identify their role in the national effort.

When discussing female patriotism Nina Silber claims that Northern women could not demonstrate their sacrifice to the cause as clearly as their Southern counterparts. For women of the Confederacy there was a clear obligation to their nation; they were required them to endure the hardships of war and to defend their homes from an invading enemy. For Northern women, however, isolated from the physical ravages of warfare, the concept of patriotism was more abstract. How could northern women demonstrate their devotion to the cause if they did not

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107 NHS, 8/28/62.

108 The age of the members of the Keene Juvenile Soldiers’ Aid Society is unclear, however Women in the American Civil War, Vol. 1 explains “Children of [Soldiers’ Aid Society] members also contributed by scraping lint for packing into wounds and starting their own Juvenile Societies to raise money.” Lisa Tendrich Frank, Women in the American Civil War, Vol. 1. (ABC-CLIO, 2008), 77; Also when describing the relief work of the women of Akron, Ohio, historian Kathleen Endres writes, “The ‘girls’ of the city formed their own groups – the High School Soldiers Aid Society and the Girls Soldiers Aid Society. In a sense, auxiliaries to the Akron Soldiers Aid Societies, these juvenile societies trained the next generation of women to take their places and community and benevolent organizations.” Kathleen Endres, Akron’s “better Half”: Women’s Clubs and the Humanization of the City, 1825-1925 (Akron, Ohio: University of Akron Press, 2006), 33.
have to endure the hardships and privations of Southerners? At this phase of the war the Soldiers’ Aid Society provided that medium through which they could demonstrate their patriotism. Their actions yielded quantifiable results that directly aided the war effort, making them active and visible participants in preserving the Union.

And since the women of the North could not demonstrate their patriotism by experiencing the privations and hardships of the battlefront, they would try the next best thing. They would, in a sense, bring the awareness of the battlefront home. In September 1862 the Society published a plea in the local papers. “Today the demands upon us are greater than ever before,” society secretary Susanna Thompson reminded readers. “The great battles that are transpiring and filling the hospitals with wounded and dying demand the efforts of all. Daily and hourly our friends at and near Washington are witnessing scenes of horror and distress that are beyond description. Because we are mercifully spared their bitter experience shall we, can we, become cold and indifferent?”

Susanna Thompson’s plea to the local women of Keene and Cheshire County was important for two reasons. First it served as a motivation for women to continue their efforts to support the war, assuring continued connection between the local populace and the national cause. Second, it injected the war into the public conscience, reminding the readers of this far-removed Northern community that although they were “mercifully spared” the horrors of the battlefield they must not forget the urgency of the times. The women of Keene were instrumental in sustaining Keene’s support for the war effort. Their motivations and sense of allegiance will be discussed in greater detail in the Chapter 5.

Another local institution that helped garner support for the soldiers was Keene’s fire department. The town’s fire department had a long history, beginning in 1808 when members of the original “Keene Fire Society” officially incorporated the Keene Engine Company and constructed the town’s first fire house. Along with fighting fires, the Keene Fire Department also became an integral thread of the town’s social fabric. As historian Benjamin Carp explains, “[American] fire companies provided a way for members to affirm themselves as participants in civic life. Although firefighting was not a primary identity as it became for modern firefighters, fire companies could contribute to a member’s civic identity and foster collective pride in a community.” Keene’s firemen helped to create this sense of civic pride and unity among its residents. For example, per order of the fire companies, each home in town was required to hang two leather buckets “in a conspicuous place…painted with the owner’s first initial and last name.” In an emergency, “every able-bodied man” in the town was to contribute to a bucket brigade. The members of the fire company also met regularly once a month to practice drills and to socialize. Over time these traditions led to a sense of camaraderie among the townsmen, which was clearly evident during the Civil War.

The fire department fostered a sense of regional identity with neighboring New England states as well, particularly after the advent of the railroad. By the time of the Civil War the annual Firemen’s Muster was fast becoming a popular tradition in Keene. The event saw fire companies from New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts, replete with equipment and

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horses, converge on Keene via rail for a day of friendly competition and fun. The first such event, held in September 1857, drew a crowd of approximately 15,000 spectators.¹¹²

In 1862 a company of the Keene Fire Department purchased a large and expensive hose wagon, an object of pride to the town. What is interesting about the piece of fire equipment is the subject matter of its elaborate decorative painting. One side of the wagon depicted the scene of Keene’s Gerould’s Block on fire, “with spectators in the foreground and other citizens hard at work removing goods from the building while firefighters battled to subdue the conflagration.” The painting on the opposite side of the wagon showed the “tumble and roar [of] the waters over Niagara Falls.” Thus, the hose wagon combined a local town scene with a symbol of national pride.¹¹³ The hose company even named their unit the Niagara Company.¹¹⁴ The firemen

¹¹² KHC, Upper Ashuelot, 573.
¹¹³ According to Sara Moore, “Beginning with images as early as 1800, Niagara Falls played a defining role in the construction of American national identity...As the embrace of manifest destiny grew ever more feverish throughout the middle years of the nineteenth century, such artists as Frederic Church looked to Niagara Falls as a source of national identity, pride, and unlimited power. His panoramic, pre-Civil War image, Niagara, from 1857, depicts America’s unrivalled natural wonder as a veritable national icon suggestive of the United States’ somewhat contradictory identity as both the new Eden and a heroic technological powerhouse able to subdue even the most sublime and omnipotent natural forces. Sara J. Moore, John White Alexander and the Construction of National Identity: Cosmopolitan American Art, 1880-1915 (University of Delaware, 2003), 67.; Other evidence of how Niagara Falls was a symbol of national pride before the Civil War can be found in The Volume of the World, published in 1857. “The number of visitors (sic) at the falls is from 12 to 15 thousand annually, and the number is increasing. While curiosity constitutes an attribute of the human character, these falls will, visited by admiring and delighted visitors, as one of the grandest exhibitions in nature. The fashionable, the opulent, and the learned here congregate, in the summer season, from the principal cities of the country; from the southern and western states, South America, the West Indies, the Canadas, and various parts of Europe, and indeed from all parts of the civilized world. An American poetess has well said of Niagara:

Flow on forever, in thy glorious robe
Of terror and beauty! God hath set
His rainbow on thy forehead, and the cloud
Mantles round thy feet. And he doth give
Thy voice of thunder, power to speak of Him
Eternally – bidding the lips of man
Keep silence, and upon the rocky altar pour
incense of awe-stricken praise


¹¹⁴ NHS, 4/2/63.
wheeled their new wagon on to Central Square where they posed for a photograph with several young boys (and a dog). (Illustration 3-1)

Illustration 3-1. Niagara Company Hose Wagon 1862
(Keene Public Library)

By the time of the Civil War the Keene Fire Department had grown to four companies: The Deluge, Niagara, Neptune, and the Hook & Ladder. After the war’s commencement these fire companies would contribute to the war effort. When members of the 1st New Hampshire Volunteers arrived in town on August 7, 1861, the soldiers stepped off the trains to a large
admiring crowd and were escorted across the street to the Cheshire House Hotel. Here they were
treated to dinner courtesy of the Deluge Fire Company. And that December at a large meeting of
the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society Meeting the Neptune Fire Engine Company
contributed a “generous donation” of $20.18 to the cause, a much needed financial boost as the
relief efforts began.

Throughout the war members of Keene’s fire companies volunteered for military service
and several perished in the army. As discussed earlier, the Keene firemen performed a crucial
service by lauding the sacrifice of fallen comrades. With each death the local companies
convened and wrote public eulogies (published in the local papers) that connected these local
men’s deaths to the greater national cause. Funeral services almost always included prominent
participation by the fire companies whose quasi-military bearing and organization fit well with
these military burials.

On February 17 1864, all companies of the Keene Fire Department worked together to
host a levee at the Town Hall to raise money for the war effort. The Sentinel lauded the firemen,
who all appeared in full dress uniforms that night, as “a very patriotic and benevolent class of
men.” The evening’s festivities included refreshments of oysters and ice cream, speeches by
“several gentlemen,” followed by dancing and “other entertainments.” The Keene Glee Club
joined forces with the ten-piece brass band of Merrill & Houlton to provide the evening’s music,
yet another example of the collaborative flexibility of various local associations to aid the war
effort.\footnote{\textit{NH5}, 2/11/64.}
The firemen’s event was open to the entire community in the name of the national cause; invitations were extended “to all” and ticket prices varied. Adult admission was twenty-five cents while children twelve years-old and younger where charged fifteen cents. An additional seventy-five cents was required for a dance ticket. Despite the “intensely cold weather” the levee was a highly successful affair, collecting $352.00 and netting $225.00 after expenses.116

The firemen chose a committee to divide the funds. One half was given to the Sanitary Commission while the other half was donated “to aid those [local] widows who have lost their husbands in the war and who are in need of such help.” Thus, the efforts of the evening were directed both locally and nationally. One half of the profits from the levee went directly to specific families in the community, while the other half, via the Sanitary Commission, was donated to strangers from across the country now supporting the national cause.117 So even by 1864, the local focus of the community was not superseded by national interests. The needs of local friends and family continued to receive direct attention, while at the same time proceeds were given to the Sanitary Commission, which were then distributed regardless of state affiliation. What is noteworthy here is that the town of Keene had the organizational ability, the impetus, and the capital resources to support both the town and the nation with success. And, like the women of the Soldiers’ Aid Society, the Fire Department demonstrated a broad sense of allegiance which balanced both local and national commitments.

Like the firemen’s benefit discussed above Keene residents continued their practice of combining traditional social gatherings and entertainments with support for sustaining the war effort. August 1864 once again saw the annual Cheshire County Musical Institute Convention

116 NHS, 2/25/64.
117 NHS, 2/11/64; NHS, 2/18/64
held in town. And that same month the Mendelesohn Choir played a benefit concert in Keene “for the benefit of our soldiers.” The newspaper ad for the Mendelesohn concert captured the spirit of these benevolent wartime events perfectly when it claimed, “When we can help our brave soldiers and give ourselves such rare pleasure at the same time, who can stay away!” A second announcement touted the concert as “a rare treat indeed to the lovers of good music and a fine opportunity for the friends of our brave soldiers, for the entire net proceeds of the concert are to be appropriated to the sick and wounded among them.”

In July, a Miss Ella Winchester gave a performance of “poems and dramatic readings” at the Town Hall, and one half of the proceeds were donated to the Christian Commission. Money was also raised in 1864 for the soldiers at the annual Cheshire County Agricultural Fair as well as the Ashuelot Valley Fair.

Despite the tremendous task of supporting the armies in a time of war, the people of Keene also held numerous events to support local interests unrelated to the war, primarily religious institutions. In February 1864 it was announced that the First Congregational Society of Keene had raised almost $8000 to pay for their extensive church renovation. That same month a magic show was held in the Town Hall to benefit Methodist church. The ad promoting this event claimed, “The citizens of the village are in the habit of liberally patronizing these festivals, we believe, and we hope they will do so on this occasion.”

That same year the women of the Episcopal Society donated $1200 for the purchase of a new church organ. And in August a Strawberry Festival raised a large sum to defray the cost of furnishing the new St.

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118 NHS, 9/1/64.
119 Ibid.
120 NHS, 9/8/64.
121 NHS, 7/21/64.
122 NHS, 2/4/64.
123 Ibid.
124 NHS, 3/24/64.
James’ Church. What these events demonstrate is that the war had not consumed the attention of the townspeople. Much like the balance between local and national relief efforts, by 1864 the people of Keene had learned to address both wartime issues as well as local interests. They had become accustomed to being a people at war where, while hardly ignoring the national crisis, life at home did continue.

On May 5, 1864, Union forces under the command of Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant clashed with The Army of Northern Virginia in the tangled woods and thickets west of Fredericksburg, Virginia known as “The Wilderness.” Back in Keene, New Hampshire the readers of the local papers saw the following plea:

AID! AID! AID! –Citizens of Keene and Cheshire County! Do you hear the call for aid from your Brave Ones who have recently fallen upon the battlefields of Virginia? If so will you aid the Christian Commission in its great work of relieving suffering by sending at once your thank offerings for God’s victories for our arms? We trust no one will assume the responsibility of withholding relief at this time from those who have a sacred right to expect it from us. Money or stores sent to this Commission will be thankfully received and forwarded by their Treasurer.

Announcements like the one above were a clear reminder to the people on the home front that the war required their support.

In May 1864 the citizens of Keene formed a local branch of the New Hampshire Soldiers’ Aid Society (different from the original Concord-based organization), which was started by New Hampshire congressman and headquartered in Washington, D.C. In response to a call from the NHSAS, the townspeople assembled in the Town Hall on the evening of May 22.

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125 NHS, 8/18/64.
126 NHS, 5/19/64.
The gathering was a mix of prominent businessmen, religious leaders, and local officials. After a reading from the Scriptures and an opening prayer, the Hon. T.M. Edwards took the floor, followed by Reverends W.O. White, J.A. Hamilton, and E.A. Renouf to make some “interesting and pertinent remarks.” The goal of this discussion was to clarify why this specific organization was necessary. The men explained that this organization “conflicts with no other—that it consists of New Hampshire men in Washington—our Senators, Representatives and others, who visit the hospitals of that city, and afford ‘aid and comfort’ to our sick and wounded men.” The demand was so great “that it is simply impossible” for the national relief agencies then in existence “to care for every individual in times like these—and that most, if not all the States have agents or committees in Washington to care especially for those from their own localities.”

Thus, the primary objective of the New Hampshire Soldiers’ Aid Society was to harness the resources of local New Hampshire communities to first collect and then distribute provisions exclusively to New Hampshire soldiers. Unlike the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society and the local branch of the Sanitary Commission, this new charitable body was organized and directed by men. By the end of the meeting a committee was formed, comprised of George Richards along with Reverends White, Hamilton, and Renouf, “to receive and transmit any funds or supplies which the people of Keene or any other town may donate for that purpose.” A collection was made from the audience that was “generously responded to,” and by the end of the proceedings “several liberal subscriptions were made.”

Less than two months later committee chair George Richards received a letter from the NHSAS agent in Washington acknowledging the receipt of $178.09 donated by various groups.

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127 NHS, 5/26/64.
128 Ibid.
and individuals in Keene “for the relief of the sick and wounded soldiers from New Hampshire.” The State Agent added that the benefactors could “feel assured that their money will be faithfully applied as it was generously and patriotically contributed.” When this letter was published in the *Sentinel*, George Richards added, “Many of our citizens will remember the effort made a few weeks since in response to calls from the NHSA Association at Washington. Their committee can testify to the alacrity and cheerfulness of the contributors – and will remark that “the channel is still open.””

But in reality, how effective was this channel, which ran from the homes, businesses and churches of New Hampshire towns such as Keene, through the town committee to State Agents in Washington, and finally to the individual sick and wounded men from New Hampshire? One major flaw in this system was the fact that the hospitals then established in Washington did not segregate patients according to state. Thus, when state agents arrived to distribute aid to patients from specific states only, it resulted in more harm than good.

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129 *NHS 7/21/64.*
The experience of Keene native Mary Carpenter provides graphic insight into the inefficiency of state-affiliated benevolence at this stage of the war. In 1864 Mary was serving in Washington D.C.’s Armory Square Hospital, where she was witness to the final step in this state-based benevolent process and the problems it instigated. (Illustration 3-2) In a November 1864 letter to her sister back in Keene she wrote, “I want to tell you about ‘state agents.’ They worry
I was serving the supper when the N.Y. State agent appeared and said, “Lady nurse I want a dish.” He was carrying a box on his arm – like our brown sugar box – I gave him my only earthen vessel I possess (which holds nearly a quart). He poured it full of pickled grapes and remarked “You will bear in mind these are only for the New York men.” Remembering then that I only had a few New Yorkers and that two of them were dangerously sick with inflammation of the bowels I said if there is more than can be eaten by the New Yorkers I suppose you will not object to my giving to some from other states. He replied as he turned on his heel in so loud a tone that the boys all heard him, “If there is more than can be eaten tonight by our men they will keep!!” The men all screamed after him, “We are glad we don’t belong to your state – we don’t eat sour grapes!” etc, etc. – There was not a person that would eat those grapes – they were unpalatable for anyone – and very unhealthy so I was glad. They said they wanted them kept to pelt him with.  

Mary Carpenter’s account clearly illustrates the bond created amongst the men by the experience of war and suffering. For these particular men, state identity had been superseded by a sense of fraternity and allegiance to the national cause. The concept of catering to individual soldiers based on state origin disturbed this union and, rather than alleviating problems, created disruption and animosity between state agents and the men they were attempting to aid. Mary explained, “State agents do not suit soldiers’ ideas at all – there is such a bond of sympathy between all soldiers that they do not relish this way of doing business – I merely tell you this because it happened last night and was quite funny. The ladies here are every one very much opposed to them. I dread the very name.” She explained to her sister that she had only one New Hampshire man in her ward and that a state agent from New Hampshire “comes to him I guess once a week and brings him some little thing, which if he don’t happen to want, after the man

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130 Mary Carpenter to Sister, Nov., 1864, Carpenter Papers.
has gone he gives to someone else. If you have a dying man for the want of what state agents have – you can’t have it if he is not from their state. It does not work well I feel it more and more every day.”

This feeling of national unity was not just witnessed by Mary Carpenter. The same spirit of camaraderie is reflected in a passage from *The United States Sanitary Commission: A Sketch of its Purposes and Work*. Regarding state-affiliated aid the writer explains that “the impression must not be given that the army, as a general thing, approved of this sectional method of aiding it. On the field, banded into one whole, fighting for the principle of Union, disunited and sectional bounty were against the grain of its daily feelings.” He then explains that many times when a state relief agent offered assistance, “the men themselves rebuked it; and there are many instances in which, when the kind face [of a state agent] looked into barn, or tent, or ward, and the kind voice said, as the basketful of relief was opened, ‘Any boy here from the State of …?’ That the men of that State kept silence; -or, better still, they answered, “No! only United States soldiers!”

The experience of Mary Carpenter makes the Keene women’s sense of allegiance to both state and national causes, discussed above, seem all the more prescient. While committed to the needs of New Hampshire soldiers they had always felt the need to work for all soldiers of the Union regardless of state affiliation. This sense of duty reflects a broader nationalism inherent to the women of this New England community. And as men from across the North coalesced into a military power to defend and preserve the Union, these soldiers quickly developed a transcendent sense of purpose and identity, one that largely downplayed state allegiance. Thus, by 1864

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131 Ibid.
efforts by state-affiliated groups such as the New Hampshire Soldiers’ Aid Society reveal a disconnect between male organizers in Washington and the broader sense of nationalism felt by both the soldiers as well as the women back in Keene. This friction was clearly evident when attempts to provide aid based on state identity were met with resistance and disgust.

Throughout 1864 and the first months of 1865 the women of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society continued their relief efforts to support the troops. But their benevolence was not solely restricted to aid for the military. In early 1864 the women of the CCSAS responded to a call from the Chicago Branch of the U.S. Sanitary Commission. The women sent a box of clothing for the African American refugees who had relocated to Cairo, Illinois. And in April 1865 the women of the Society sent donations to a new charitable organization known as the American Union Commission, which had its regional branch located in Boston, Massachusetts. Several barrels containing “garments of every description for men, women and children” along with “4 bedquilts” were sent to aid “Refugees in West Va. and East Tennessee.”

Established in 1865 The American Union Commission was created for “the amelioration of the condition of loyalists, refugees from the South, who have sought an asylum from the calamities of the war, in the loyal states, and within the lines of our armies.” It was formed specifically “for the purpose of aiding and co-operating with the people of those portions of the United States which have been desolated and impoverished by the war, in the restoration of their civil and social condition, upon the basis of industry, education, freedom, and Christian morality.”

Thus, the women of Keene again demonstrated a broader sense of obligation to

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133 Letter of Katherine Wheeler to Chicago Sanitary Commission, January 22, 1864, Records of the CCSAS.
134 NHS, 4/6/65.
fellow Americans, not only soldiers fighting for the national cause but men, women, and children who had been displaced by the war as well.

**Chapter Conclusion**

The initial outpouring of nationalistic patriotism following Fort Sumter was short-lived, and as the casualties began to mount the reality of war began to take its toll on the home front. In order to sustain support for the war effort the people of Keene continued to rely on their local associations and institutions. As the community engaged in expanding relief efforts, performed recruiting drives, and dealt with the deaths of loved ones on the local level they were building new tangible connections to the nation. But changes were about to take place that would force the people of this New Hampshire town to rethink the value of the cause, the role of the federal government, and their own sense of national identity.
Chapter 4
Emancipation and Division

On September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, marking a significant turning point in the war. Now the issue of emancipation became directly connected with the Union war effort, requiring the Northern populace to rethink both the goals of the conflict, as well as their future in a post-emancipation society. In Keene, local institutions again played an integral role in helping the public adjust to these new measures. The local newspapers vied to influence public opinion, and public lectures provided pertinent information from distant places, helping forge connections between the local community and the rest of the nation. And finally, as New Englanders, the people of Keene held both traditional and logistical ties with their neighboring states. These ties had been constructed and strengthened for generations, and by the mid-19th century there existed a strong sense of regional identity – a New England identity. This regional identity was another example of an existing tradition that helped the people of Keene build nationalism in support of the war.

The Local Press and Maintaining Political Unity

As the war continued to escalate, political dissent appeared throughout the North. The basis of this division was the expansion of federal powers. Republicans and many pro-war Democrats saw the necessity of stronger federal power in this time of crisis. Most Democrats, however, saw Lincoln’s use of power as unconstitutional and unwarranted.¹ In Keene these

¹ Gallman, North Fights the Civil War, 49.
tensions could be seen as well, which threatened to hamper the successful construction of a growing wartime nationalism. The first subtle signs of division could be seen as early as the summer of 1861 following First Bull Run. During an early September war rally Captain Tileston Barker, a member of the 2nd New Hampshire and a veteran of Bull Run, claimed he was “in for the war, and should fight on until he saw the stars and stripes wave in triumph over all our territory.” He “alluded feelingly” to the fact that some of his Democratic friends had taunted him and demanded to know why he was fighting this “black republican” war. His forceful reply was, “If standing by the old flag of [my] fathers, by the Constitution and government of [my] country when assailed by traitors was ‘black republicanism,’ then [I am] a black Republican, thank God!”

Barker’s message was clear: unmitigated support for the war by those at home was imperative. As Americans they had an inherent duty to uphold the legacy of the Revolution and the Founding Fathers. When those soldiers now serving returned from the war they would remember the “traitors and cowards” who had neglected to come to the defense of the country in this time of crisis. He added ominously that these men “should and would be marked.” But despite apparent tensions described by Barker, the local paper reported that this September 1861 “meeting was participated in by men of all parties, and its spirit was excellent.”

Throughout the late fall and early winter of 1861, the training and equipping of the 6th New Hampshire largely occupied the people of the town. But with the new year came the campaign season for New Hampshire, who held their yearly state elections every March. These first wartime elections, particularly for the office of Governor, took on heightened importance

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2 NHS, 9/12/61.
3 Ibid.
and amplified the political tensions in Keene. In a February editorial pro-Republican *New Hampshire Sentinel* editor Thomas Hale declared that as the state election neared “it is so palpably the duty of every loyal voter to sustain the National Administration” that there was hardly need for discussion. In these times of “great national peril” every man, regardless of party was “bound by every moral and political obligation” to support the Republican government. Hale then appealed to voters as citizens of New Hampshire, claiming that “no state in the Union has more reliable loyal citizens than ours,” adding “and *they* are not confined to any one party.”

Once again Hale made a deliberate attempt to garner the support of Democratic voters. He claimed that these loyal Democrats “should see to it that [New Hampshire] suffer no detriment by the success of disloyal men.”

Hale next included excerpts from a circular written by the Republican State Committee, which explained that, since the last elections in March 1861, the outbreak of Rebellion had required a vigorous and unfltering defense of the Lincoln administration. The Republican nominees in the upcoming contest were “honest and patriotic men who, who will administer the affairs of the State with prudence, discretion and economy, and will look only to the salvation of the country.” As a strike against what they called disloyal Northerners, the committee’s proclamation claimed that an overwhelming Republican victory would prove that “the voice of New Hampshire shall be *really* unanimous in the coming election in condemnation of traitors, whether at the North or the South.”

Hale’s push for non-partisanship, or at the very least more independent voting, was not merely a local ploy to gain Republican votes but reflected a larger political strategy. As early as

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4 *NHS*, 2/20/62.
5 Ibid.
June 1861, talk of a Union Party, which ostensibly dismissed political allegiances in favor of loyalty to the federal administration, emerged in New Hampshire. Due to the support of the war by many prominent Democrats, a number of Republicans became convinced “of the porosity of Democratic loyalties.” As Melinda Lawson states, once the war began “conflicting visions” due to party loyalties were no longer possible. “Devotion to party at the expense of nation was no longer merely troubling; it jeopardized the very existence of the Union.” As a result, over the coming years the Republicans, both statewide and nationally, would continually stress support of the Lincoln Administration as loyalty to the nation. And throughout this process the *New Hampshire Sentinel* would promote this larger political ideology to the people of Keene, demonstrating again how nationalism can be constructed through local institutions.

In a March editorial titled “An Appeal to Patriots,” the *Sentinel’s* Thomas Hale once again exhorted that, in the upcoming elections, voters had the most important duty to discharge that had ever “devolved upon them since this country came into existence.” They must choose between “a manly, unconditional support of a Government more beneficent than was ever devised by the wisdom of man, and to which we are indebted, under God,” for “our blessings” and a “hesitating, unconditional support of a Government in which the love of party” outweighed “love of country.” Hale urged that the “dividing line” should not be between parties, but between “loyalty and disloyalty” to the national administration.

What is noteworthy here is that Hale’s plea for Republican support in the state elections was framed entirely in national terms. There were no local issues at stake here, only that support

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7 Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, 70.
8 *NHS*, 3/6/62.
for local and state Republicans would assure support for the national effort. As Lex Renda explains, during the political campaigns “the gravity of the crisis dwarfed all other issues.” In New Hampshire politicians of both parties “needed the war issue upon which to base their next campaigns, because other issues proved to be of little help to either party.”

Thus for Republicans like Editor Thomas Hale the only thing that mattered was loyalty to the Republican Party to sustain the national war effort.

The March 1862 gubernatorial election results showed an overwhelming Republican support among Cheshire County residents whose votes were distributed in the following manner: Republican 62%, Democratic 37%, third party .01%. In Keene voters gave 520 to the Republican candidate and to 242 to the Democrat, with 17 votes going to a third party candidate. Out of all voters, including those who voted for the third party candidate, 67% supported the Republican candidate for governor as opposed to 31% who cast a vote for the Democratic runner. Keene votership showed a slight shift toward the Democrats from the 1861 election. The previous March the Republican gubernatorial candidate had garnered 69% of Keene’s votes (570 votes) while the Democrat received 30% (256 votes). While there certainly may have been other factors which contributed to this shift, such as soldiers away on duty and the presence of a third candidate, the election did demonstrate that political loyalties could be swayed, particularly during this unprecedented national crisis. The results underscored the importance of the efforts by the New Hampshire Sentinel to continually promote bipartisan support for the Lincoln Administration in order to ensure allegiance from both core Republicans and the small group of marginal voters who could be influenced by either side.

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9 Renda, Running on the Record, 94, 101.
10 NHS, 3/20/62.
Despite the slight drop in Republican support, the New Hampshire Sentinel used the March election victory to further their nationalistic message, which stressed the necessity of party alliance between, local, state, and federal powers to advance the Northern cause. The results showed, the Sentinel concluded, that “an important victory has been seen at home – that the State ticket and Legislature have been carried for the State and National Administrations and the war.”\(^\text{11}\)

The Sentinel also used the opportunity to cast more negative light on the Democracy. As evidence of that party’s general “disloyalty,” the newspaper printed several resolutions, which had been adopted at a recent Democratic convention held in Cheshire County. They hoped that “our readers may see for themselves the depravity of democratic politicians in this county.” The resolutions revealed that by January of 1862, due to the rising human cost of war, some Democrats in Cheshire County were calling for a cessation of hostilities so that they might meet with Southern “political brethren on equal grounds” in an effort to restore “proper relations of our country.”\(^\text{12}\) The resolutions further went on to state that secession had brought upon “unwelcome responsibilities” and that the separation of North and South was “incompatible with the highest interests of the States of the Union.” The local Democrats expressed their belief regarding the true function of the country’s “double form of Government – State and National – namely

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\text{that the utility, safety, and prosperity of all municipal concerns depend on their local regulation and control exclusively, giving to the Federal Government only the tribute due through their common protection, prescribed by the delegated powers to the parent Governments, That we regard the practice of this political theory as essential, if not absolutely indispensable, to maintain peace and order.}
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\(^{11}\) NHS, 3/13/62.
\(^{12}\) Ibid.
among organized communities and States republican in their form, and loyalty to the Union of the States.¹³

The *Sentinel* added sarcastically, “Who will now deny that the unterrified democracy of Old Cheshire is as intellectual as it is loyal?” But in the same paper the *Sentinel* again made the attempt to reinforce the idea that the dividing line in the North should be drawn between those loyal and disloyal to the national administration, and not be based solely on party affiliation. “Democrats who fight for the Union and who unconditionally sustain the Government are entitled to as much of our sympathy as the most loyal Republican,” the newspaper claimed, “and if any difference is to be made, it should be in favor of those who have to break over the trammels of party.”¹⁴

But throughout these discussions one theme emerges. By the beginning of 1862 there were clear differences between New Hampshire Republicans and some New Hampshire Democrats regarding both the prosecution of the war as well as powers of local versus federal governments. As evidenced by the aforementioned resolutions, some Democrats of Cheshire County favored a nationalism that emphasized a Union of semiautonomous states. To local Republicans however, the war had made it imperative that federal powers now superseded those of the states if the nation were to endure. There should be an unquestioning bipartisan support of the federal government during the crisis.

Efforts to urge unity, such as those being espoused by the *New Hampshire Sentinel*, were being promulgated in Republican newspapers throughout the nation. According to Melinda

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¹³ Ibid.
¹⁴ Ibid.
Lawson, “The common underlying theme, increasing in frequency as the conflict wore on, was the need to remain united against the greatest threat the Union had ever faced. And this unity meant…more than anything else, bipartisanship.”\textsuperscript{15} Thus, the \textit{New Hampshire Sentinel} was building nationalism in two ways. First, it was forging a conscious belief that the fate of the country rested on an unflinching and unquestioning support of the federal administration, facilitating a tendency to look beyond the state authority and to Washington. Second, by advancing a political message that was being echoed in thousands of other presses throughout the country, it was strengthening ties between the people of Keene and the “imagined community”\textsuperscript{16} of Americans via this wartime Republican ideology: Americans throughout the North were being encouraged to think alike.

\textsuperscript{15} Lawson, \textit{Patriot Fires}, 79.
\textsuperscript{16} Term coined by Benedict Anderson in \textit{Imagined Communities}. 
The news of the president’s Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September of 1862 marked a key point in the war. The measure had instigated much discussion among the Northern public, seen as too weak by abolitionists and as unconstitutional by conservatives. As a result the issue exacerbated political divisions that had already existed throughout the North. To Republican editor Thomas Hale, the issue represented a “crucible by which to try men’s loyalties.”\textsuperscript{17} (Illustration 4-1) Hale wasted no time in rallying public support for the Lincoln

\textsuperscript{17} NHS, 10/9/62.
Administration’s new war measure. “Stand by the President” he boldly declared in his October 4, 1862, editorial. The ardent Republican Hale believed Lincoln to be personally “honest and Patriotic.” He assured his readers that the president had “taken this step from the best of motives, after consulting loyal and intelligent men in the border slave states, as well as from all the free states.”

To illustrate his position, the editor reached across both party and state lines, citing specific Democratic governors and army officers who had expressed support for the Emancipation Proclamation. These “unselfish and patriotic” men of both parties viewed the act as a “necessary war measure” to bring the bloody conflict to a close, “assuring the life of the nation.” And these men “came very rationally to the conclusion to sustain [Lincoln] in the Herculean labors [as commander-in-chief] imposed by the Constitution.”

There was no room for disagreement at this time, in Hale’s view. Failure to support the president was to “aid and gratify the rebels in their work of destruction.” Hale claimed that true national loyalty required support of all federal measures; therefore, loyalty to the nation required an endorsement of the Emancipation Proclamation. To underscore the importance of this redefined, and more radical, national loyalty, Hale cited a speech by War Democrat Joseph Holt of Kentucky, who had been appointed as Judge Advocate General by Lincoln and who worked closely with the president. Holt, whom Editor Hale called a “great loyal democrat,” compared

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18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 David Heidler and Jeanne Heidler, "Holt, Joseph (1807-1894)". In Encyclopedia of the American Civil War: A Political, Social, and Military History. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2000. Holt had been a staunch Democrat and had served as Secretary of War under James Buchanan. After secession, however, he became an ardent supporter of the Union. According to Heidler and Heidler, “Holt’s vigorous unionism brought him to the attention of the Lincoln administration. Lincoln and his cabinet, realizing what a political asset this border state Unionist could be, looked for an appropriate Federal appointment for Holt. In early 1862 he received a temporary appointment to a board auditing government arms contracts. But in September 1862, he was given the job that he would hold for the remainder of the war and beyond. The Lincoln administration created the office of judge advocate general and appointed Holt with the rank of colonel as its first occupant.”
the state of the nation to that of a drowning man “whom every law, human and divine, justified in seizing upon anything or employing any means within his reach, to save his life.” Hale agreed that the president and his administration were right in taking any measures necessary to save the “drowning” country, and, he warned, “woe be to the politicians that throw obstacles in their path!”

One important distinction to make is that Hale did not urge support of emancipation for moral reasons, that it would help end the cruelties and injustice of those held in bondage. Rather, his appeal to support the federal government at this time was conveyed solely as a measure to cripple the South. Gary Gallagher argues in *The Union War* that emancipation was seen by a majority of Northerners as a weapon with which to achieve the ultimate and original goal of the conflict: the preservation of the Union. Hale’s public stance seems to reflect this moderate view at this point in the war.

In the fall of 1862 Democrats attacked the Lincoln Administration, claiming wanton abuse of federal power. In New Hampshire the official State Democratic platform “presented a litany of charges against the administration.” New Hampshire Democrats “‘unqualifiedly condemned’ the [Emancipation] proclamation ‘as unwarranted by the constitution, in violation of the solemnly pledged faith of the administration,’ and destructive of any chance for a ‘restored Union.’” During this critical juncture in the war, the Democratic press continually hammered the actions of the federal government, claiming that expansive federal policies had altered the original goal of preserving the Union.

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22 [NHS], 10/9/63.
The result of this debate was two competing views of nationalism. Both Republicans and Conservative Democrats claimed to be loyal to the nation, but they had two very different views of what the nation was. Democrats saw the future of the country as a continuation of the prewar past. Republicans, however, viewed the Civil War as a progressive movement in which radical measures were necessary for victory. These war measures, in turn, required the support of the people. When viewed this way, Democratic newspapers like Keene’s *Cheshire Republican* became obstacles to building successful Republican wartime nationalism at this critical moment in the nation’s history. As such, the Republican *New Hampshire Sentinel* became an increasingly more integral component of sustaining local support for the Union effort. The paper was a leading advocate for the federal government’s expanding policies as the relationship between the people of Keene and the federal government changed over the war years.

On January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation became official, providing enemies of the Lincoln Administration more evidence of what they viewed as the unchecked and exploitive broadening powers of the federal government. In February 1863, in an attempt to illustrate how the Emancipation Proclamation was detrimental to army morale, Keene’s Democratic newspaper the *Cheshire Republican* printed a letter reportedly from a wounded Cheshire County soldier of the 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) New Hampshire. The man bragged, “Don’t know when I shall go to my regiment, nor don’t care…if I have got to fight for a pack of niggers.”\(^{25}\)

To rebut the argument, the *New Hampshire Sentinel* published a report from another member of the 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) New Hampshire who claimed that the writer of the aforementioned letter “had been so disloyal that his company has been on the point of driving him off – that he has now

\(^{25}\) *NHS*, 2/19/62.
been discharged from the hospital for two months, and ordered to his regiment as fit for service – but he still refuses to go.” The Sentinel writers claimed, “Such a creature is a fit tool for the dirty, disloyal democracy, and his conduct, as well as the character of his letter, shows that he has had the necessary training by the party that now claims him, to make him a dutiful subject of Jeff. Davis.” The Sentinel used this argument between local soldiers to illustrate the dangers of withdrawing support for the Lincoln Administration at this precarious time, placing the blame for this dissidence on “disloyal” Democrats. “This subject is a sad commentary on the debauching influence of a disloyal press and disloyal politicians. The readers of the [Cheshire] Republican can judge by this, what may be the character of other electioneering stuff in that paper.”26

A week later the Democratic Cheshire Republican responded, chastising the Sentinel for being so critical of a man now in service to his country. Nonsense, replied the writers of the Sentinel. “The young man would not probably be guilty of writing such discreditable stuff had he not been tampered with” by disloyal Democrats “who are base enough to wish the rebels to succeed, and who are using all their influences to dishearten, debauch, and demoralize the army, in order that they, [the disloyal Democrats], may succeed.” So it was not the soldier’s fault, but rather the blame should go to disloyal Democrats who had influenced the soldier’s thinking. The Sentinel’s pointed retort concluded with the statement that, “All the bad conduct of the soldier comes from the debauching influence of copperhead politicians.”27

The war of words between the two local papers was a reflection of the political sniping that had escalated during this election season. The weeks leading up to the March 1863 state elections also brought about a series of political stump speeches in Keene. The Lincoln

26 NHS, 2/26/63.
27 NHS, 3/5/63.
Administration’s introduction of emancipation to the war effort had torn open much of the already tenuous bipartisan sentiment, revealing sharp differences between competing views of federal powers. Thomas Hale continued to stress that loyalty to the nation required support of the Emancipation Proclamation. His target audience was not only core Republicans but also those marginal voters whose political opinions might be swayed. The Sentinel used the coverage of speeches to underscore the soundness and logic of the Republican platform, while at the same time undermine Democratic views on the war.

Following a January 1863 speech by Republican state congressional candidate James Patterson, the Sentinel heaped praise, claiming Patterson was “at once a graceful and powerful speaker – using argument and method, exhibiting a commendable degree of study and discipline. But best of all,” the report continued, “he is thoroughly patriotic, appreciating the momentous crisis that is upon us.”28 The glowing review of Patterson’s speech, which praised both the Republican candidate’s delivery and content, provides a reference with which to contrast the Sentinel’s coverage of Democratic speeches given at Keene that election season.

When prominent Democratic politician O. A. Brewster spoke at Keene in February 1863, reporters for the Sentinel covered the event. Brewster “believed the President honest, and had supported him with all his mighty energies” until the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, which he claimed was unconstitutional and forced by the “clamors of fanatical abolitionists.” The Confiscation Acts and the suspension of the writ of Habeas Corpus were also unconstitutional, and now Brewster urged the withdrawal of all support for the federal administration until “the war was conducted on Constitutional principles.” Brewster made clear

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28 NHS, 2/5/63.
his racist viewpoint when he proclaimed that “Sambo’s skin must be preserved unscratched and his wool undiminished in its value, or, -Oh dear!,” related the Sentinel, “The orator could not tell what would be.” The Sentinel reporter concluded by attempting to discount Brewster’s argument through ridicule, writing, “His wind held out for over two hours. His foolish expressions and denunciations of abolitionists were loudly cheered by the faithful [Democrats], while his sensible and patriotic remarks were listened to with ominous silence.”29

Reporting on another early 1863 Democratic rally in Keene’s Town Hall, the Sentinel wrote, “The Meeting was opened by a nasal salute from Don H. Woodward, Esq., the exponent of copperhead democracy in Keene, who spoke, or sung, as follows…” Then after a brief summary of Woodward’s speech the Sentinel claimed that most of his oration was “unintelligible, windy nothingness and characteristic nonsense.”30

Next to speak after Woodward was former Democratic state senator William Burns who, the Sentinel reported, “spent most of the time indicting [the Republican Party] under the head of ‘an appeal to reason’ which really seemed more of a joke than anything else.” Burns attempted to label the Republicans as abolitionists who, in conjunction with ardent Southern secessionists, were prohibiting a cessation of hostilities. He espoused a Democratic view of reconciliation, in which the North and South would reunite through the leadership of the Democrats from both sides, and the Constitutional values of limited government would be restored. The federal government had no right to interfere with slavery, he argued. Burns’s appeal to the people of Keene reflected a larger push by Democrats nationwide to halt the radical policies of the Lincoln Administration. According to historian Joel Silbey, by 1863 “Democratic campaign appeals

29 NHS, 2/12/63.  
30 NHS, 3/5/63.
increasingly centered on the impossibility of restoring the Union under the conditions established by Republican abolitionist policies. Peace and restoration were possible only if the North reassured the South and established for a peaceful and Constitutional Union.” The war could end “if the Union sentiment in the South were allowed room to develop and bring sense back to the bulk of the Southern people.”

The writers of the *Sentinel* skillfully unraveled the Democratic argument, revealing the inconsistencies and unsupported claims of Democrat candidate William Burns’s speech. “Can it be that Mr. Burns is crazy?” the *Sentinel* posited. “Why don’t Burns go South and take the stump in favor of peace? I think he would soon be cured of his political insanity, and all other ills human flesh is heir to.” The *Sentinel* report concluded with a warning, which again linked opposition to Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation as disloyalty to the country. “Let no one be deceived by this siren song of peace – it allures only upon the nation tenfold ruin – there is no peace while traitors are in arms and let every patriot voter rise up at the polls and rebuke Mr. Burns who wears the livery of a traitor in disguise. His ‘appeal to reason’ was an appeal to cowardice, selfishness, and all the lowest passions of men.”

The extensive attempts to solicit Republican votes can be seen in an editorial that appeared in the March 5, 1863, issue of the *Sentinel*, just five days before the New Hampshire state elections. The piece, titled “A Word for Young Men,” was an appeal to the young men of Keene to vote. “There are many young men who will cast their vote for the first time next

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32 NHS, 3/5/63.
Tuesday, and there are still a large number who have voted but a few times and who have therefore no very deep rooted prejudices,” the author explained. “Their characters are not so thoroughly established as those who have trained many years in party politics, and they have not, therefore, so many prejudices to overcome. None ought to have any that would that would prevent a faithful discharge of duty to country, in its hour of trial and danger; but the young voter has an easier path to duty and honor.” And this path was to support the federal government through a Republican vote.33

“This is a time to try men’s patriotism,” reminded the writer, “and it is of the highest importance that young men especially should make a clean record.” There was no doubt the war would end “in the triumphant vindication of the national authority and flag.” And while there would inevitably be more setbacks and mistakes “the Government of a great and free people must triumph in the end.” The writer cautioned the young men of Keene not to be numbered among the “traitorous” voters who sided with the Democrats, again equating local support of the Republican Party with national loyalty. “Let young men see to it then, that when the Union is restored and peace crowns the national life-struggle, the finger of derision and scorn be not pointed toward them as traitors to their country in the great peril of its existence.” The appeal ended with the urgent plea that connected the local men with the rest of the nation. “Vote, young men of New Hampshire, for your country’s nationality and flag- vote against treason and all sympathizers with treason – vote to keep your proud and honored State alongside of the national government, and be sure to vote so as to give the armed enemies of that government no cause for rejoicing.”34

33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
The appeal to young voters above illustrates two important points. First, as we have seen before, the national crisis had altered the nature of political campaigns, making national issues the priority of local and state campaigns. Second, the piece reflects the effort to target those marginal voters who were often the key to determining election outcomes. These young, first time voters were coming of age amidst the urgency and uncertainties of civil war. As such they may not have been as beholden to traditional party allegiances. The article was clearly a blatant attempt to impress into the minds of these young men that, in this time of war, loyalty to the nation meant support of the Republican Party, and voting for the Democracy was tantamount to treason.

Minutes from the Keene Democratic Committee meeting of Saturday March 7, 1863 also reveal an urgent concern for soliciting young voters. The Keene Democrats that evening, just three days before the state elections, nominated a “Rallying Committee” whose purpose was “to visit the several school districts on Monday” in an effort to “bring in the votes on Tuesday.”

The results of the March 1863 gubernatorial elections are revealing. While there had been a slight shift in voter distribution between the two major parties, Keene remained a staunchly Republican town. The Republican gubernatorial candidate received 62% of the vote, down from 67% of 1862. The Democratic candidate garnered 34% of the vote, up 3% from the previous year. In another comparison, the 1860 presidential election had seen 69% of Keene’s voters cast their ballot for Lincoln while 30% supported the two Democratic candidates. However, the 1863 New Hampshire gubernatorial election had also offered a significant third candidate: War Democrat Harriman who had run under the still developing “Union Party,”

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35 Records of the Keene Democratic Committee, March 7, 1863, NHHS.
which supported the war effort regardless of previous party affiliation. Harriman received 25 votes in Keene which, when combined with the 540 Republican ballots cast, depict 65% of Keene voters in favor of the current war effort. Thus, despite both the staggering casualty rates of the previous year, as well as the expansive measures of the federal government, the town of Keene remained committed to the Republican administration’s prosecution of the war.37

Overall, the New Hampshire gubernatorial race was far tighter than it was in Keene. The state split almost in half between Republican and Democratic candidates. However, between Republican candidate Joseph Gilmore and Union candidate Walter Harriman New Hampshire voters cast 51% of their votes in favor of the war effort. Since the New Hampshire State legislature (who ultimately decided the governorship) had a Republican majority, the Republican candidate retained the office.38

During this election, which occurred during what one New Hampshire historian later called “the darkest days of the struggle with the Rebellion,”39 the tireless effort of the New Hampshire Sentinel was likely a key component to sustaining support. As we have seen, newspapers were a powerful and ubiquitous source of information in mid-nineteenth century America and integral to influencing public opinion. And while not conclusive, one example may help demonstrate the political power of the local press. A year earlier, during the annual New Hampshire gubernatorial election of 1862, the competing candidates “won almost precisely the same shares of the major party vote that they had won in the two-man race of 1861.” The one exception was Rockingham County, which saw an increase in Republican votes and where,

37 NHS, 3/19/63.
38 Amos Hadley, History of Concord (Concord, NH: City History Commission, 1896), 502; Renda, Running on the Record, 116.
39 Ibid.
coincidentally, the local Democratic newspaper had recently gone under and “left that county without a Democratic organ.”40 Thus, the fact that the Sentinel was there to continually rebut and defend against attacks coming from the Democrats was instrumental to maintaining support for the war in Keene.

And the New Hampshire Sentinel would remain dedicated to actively shaping local public opinion to support the federal government during this crucial time. Along with his own editorials, Thomas Hale published the writings of other prominent Republicans. In June 1863, for example, the Sentinel included a powerful Republican appeal by Rev. Horatio Stebbins titled “Stand by in Faith.” The essay is a direct attempt to instill confidence amidst the tumultuous uncertainty of the times. “We shall not know precisely what the war is for until it is over,” Stebbins boldly proclaimed, “We say it is for the Constitution; that is true; and we shall find what the Constitution is. All we want is to get that paper read with the right accent and correct punctuation. We fight for the Union; that is true; but we shall find what the Union is; which we have never known as yet. We shall accomplish many things which we do not think of.”

Stebbins’ words seem to grapple with the momentous changes that the past year had wrought for Northerners. The national struggle had become more complex since 1861, and new issues, most notably emancipation, had come to be intertwined with the war effort. To quell this sense of uncertainty, Stebbins urged people to “stand by in faith,” and all would be revealed, as if they were in the midst of some grand plan for the republic destined by Providence. There remained but one requirement of the citizens of the North at this momentous time: “Let us be simply loyal to the government,” and to resist any temptation to “use all our patriotism in abuse or fault finding. Above all, let us avoid that fallacy, specious and double-tongued, of a distinction

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40 Renda, Running on the Record, 109.
between the administration and the government,” explained Stebbins, “Undoubtedly there is a philosophic distinction between a government and the administration; but when made the basis of a practical opposition to the government and pushed to its conclusion, it is the subversion of all government.” Editorials such as these helped inform the people of Keene of a wider view of Republican values. With so much uncertainty at this point in the war, it helped to assure, and in many ways propagandize, the view that the broadening powers of the Lincoln policies would ultimately lead to victory. It also underscores Thomas Hale’s point that loyalty to the federal government, in this case an almost blind allegiance, was the overriding requisite at this time. This definition of national loyalty espoused by both Stebbins and Hale was not a local tactic, but reflected burgeoning national sense of anti-partisanship for the sake of the war. By 1863 this strategy became extremely effective as a way to reframe national loyalties in the face of mounting criticism of federal policies. As historian Adam Smith explains in his book No Party Now,

When Peace Democrats, or Copperheads as they were known, ran in elections calling for an armistice and savaging the Lincoln administration not just for its emancipation policy but as a tyrannous usurper of republican government, administration supporters were quick to connect partisanship with treason. Drawing on a nonpartisan rhetoric ideal dating back to the founders, Lincoln supporters presented a vision of patriotic loyalty and unity that was intended to stand in opposition to the ‘divisive’ partisanship that they associated with Democrats, demagoguery and disloyalty.41

Emancipation was now included alongside the long-cherished national ideals of “Liberty” and “Union,” both expanding and complicating the goals of the Northern war effort.

41 Smith, No Party Now, 5.
During this transitional phase, as new policies and government actions began to broaden the scope of the Union war effort, one important way the residents of Keene kept apprised of the latest information was through visiting lecturers. (Illustration 4-2) The “public lecture,” which had emerged in the 1830s and 1840s, had by midcentury become an integral institution in
American culture. In fact, historian Donald Scott contends that “it would be difficult to exaggerate the scale and scope of public lecturing” in mid-nineteenth century America.42

The public lecture was also important to building nationalism, for three reasons. First, the form was ubiquitous. As Scott explains, “By the mid-1840s few northern towns of 1,000 or more people lacked at least one association sponsoring lectures.” And even during this period of westward expansion “a lecture society was frequently among the first institutions established in a newly formed town.”43 By the 1850s an estimated 400,000 people attended lectures every week throughout the North alone.44 So, much like newspapers, the public lecture represented another medium through which Americans could access information locally, but was akin to what Benedict Anderson referred to as the “mass ceremony” of newspaper reading, which provided Americans across the nation with a common ritual.45

Second, prominent lecturers of the mid nineteenth-century would often present the same lecture in every venue, resulting in a uniformity of diffusion of knowledge and opinion across many different states. It was also common for newspapers to print the text of lectures given in other places of the country.46 So whether Americans attended a lecture in person or read it in print, the medium helped foster a stronger connection to the “imagined community”47 of their fellow countrymen and women.

43 Ibid.
45 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.
46 Scott, “Popular Lecture,” 798.
47 The concept of “imagined community” is from Benedict Anderson’s study of modern nationalism: “*Imagined Communities.*”
Third, the lectures were truly “public.” They were meant to “embrace all [white] members of the community” regardless of social standing, political or religious affiliation, or gender, Scott explains. There was also an overwhelming belief among Americans of that time that there should unfettered access to knowledge, or what they considered “useful information.” This concept of “useful” knowledge, information that promoted progress, growth, and improvement, was one that was inculcated into American schoolchildren from an early age. In her study of nineteenth-century school books historian Ruth Miller Elson found that the term “useful knowledge” was so prevalent in these texts that is was evident that “this kind of knowledge” was a fundamental element of “a sound education” and “presumed to be uniquely characteristic of American education.” And, as Donald Scott explains, these public lectures “presented a quintessentially democratic form of knowledge, which gained its legitimacy from the people’s sanction rather than by imposition.” So while these public lectures were local, they provided a forum in which the local populace could be exposed to the latest “useful knowledge,” making them better prepared to become involved in the national conversation of the times.

By the time of the Civil War, like most communities across the North, the lecture was an important and vibrant institution in Keene. As early as the 1820s two local organizations, the Keene Forensic Society and Lyceum and the Keene Book Society, had begun hosting semi-regular lectures. The year 1832 saw the first nationally known speaker address the town when Noah Webster lectured at the Town Hall. Reflecting the pattern of most Northern

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52 Ibid., 418.
communities, Keene’s lectures continued to grow and evolve. By the 1850s the Keene Lyceum had become a permanent institution that now attracted nationally prominent figures. In 1857 renowned poet and humorist John Godfrey Saxe lectured at the Keene Town Hall on “New England Character,” reflecting yet again New England’s sense of regional identity.\textsuperscript{53} Among other notables who spoke at Keene were Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, and Henry Ward Beecher, and William Lloyd Garrison.\textsuperscript{54}

A few days before his scheduled appearances in Keene, William Lloyd Garrison wrote to Keene resident E.A. Webb regarding his upcoming antislavery lectures. “I have long been desirous of seeing your beautiful village (for such it is always represented to be).” He confessed that “though I cannot hope to induce many of your citizens to accept all my views on the subject of slavery, I trust their prejudices against me will be somewhat mitigated, after giving me a fair hearing, which is all I ask.” Hoping to maximize the effectiveness of his antislavery message he further probed Webb, “Perhaps you will suggest to me some points to touch upon, which will be hitting the nail upon the head, locally speaking. What does Keene need?”\textsuperscript{55} The lectures appear to have been well received. One witness reported that Garrison’s speech “was without the ranting style excess in language which common report attributed to him.” The reporter concluded, “We certainly rejoice in the change of public opinion which allows him to speak and be heard without fear of molestation, which certainly is a gain for practical liberty, if not for the freedom of the slave.”\textsuperscript{56}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{53} Clifford Wilber, ed. \textit{The Repertory}, Vol. 1, 2 (1925), 556.
\bibitem{54} Griffin, \textit{History of Keene}, 457; KHC, \textit{Upper Ashuelot}, 98.
\bibitem{55} William Lloyd Garrison to E.A. Webb, September 25, 1855, NHHS.
\bibitem{56} Wilber, \textit{The Repertory}, Vol.1, 12 (1925), 556.
\end{thebibliography}
When the Civil War began, the public lecture was perfectly suited to provide the community of Keene with the most current information. Lecturers could adapt their subjects to the times, incorporating the war into the context of their presentations. For example, in December 1861, a Mr. Charles L. Balch, who had recently returned from a trip through Europe, presented a public lecture on “his Transatlantic Travels and the American War.” Travel lectures of this period were highly popular. While this lecture format was based on “curious fact” often about “exotic and mysterious places,” it also served to “either implicitly or explicitly deepen the awareness of American custom and character.” Travel lectures could “foster through contrast a fuller appreciation of the nature and distinctiveness of American character.” Mr. Balch’s lecture, which “abounds in humorous delineations of national character,” may have served a similar purpose during this early phase of the war.

Lecturers could address the war in a general way, providing new perspectives on the national crisis. In February 1862, for example, Rev. R. S. Stubbs of Claremont, New Hampshire visited Keene with his lecture entitled “Menahem and Gideon: or Shall We Buy or Conquer a Peace?” In February 1863 a local lawyer delivered “a studied, classic and eloquent analysis of the results of national revolution,” which, claimed the Sentinel newspaper, helped in “throwing bright rays of hope on the dark Present.”

Lecturers could also hone their remarks to target a specific audience. In February 1863 Rev. Leonard Tracy of Keene’s Baptist Church presented an oration “Young Men for the Times.” Tracy claimed, “The young man is the most important member of society. He does the work of the present, and will tone the character of the future.”

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58 NHS, 2/6/62.
59 NHS, 2/5/63.
responsibilities “he is called upon to be strong, faithful, and good.” The reverend continued, “True greatness and the way to success consist in a man’s seeing, meeting, and mastering the exigencies of his country and age.” It was “this ability, under Providence,” that had empowered Moses and Martin Luther to realize great achievements in their own respective times. And here in America it enabled “Roger Williams to withstand the stern Puritans and inaugurate the principle of religious toleration in America, Franklin to become the foremost man of his age, and Washington to win and wear the noble title of ‘father of his country’.”

Tracy then drew his audience into his sweeping narrative, connecting the young men of the Keene with the fabled men of old. “The exigencies of the present time in our distracted country demand the able-bodied, strong-minded, pure hearted young man; in other words, muscle to handle the instruments of war, brain to fight the falsehoods and errors of our foes, and a heart to pity and forgive the suffering penitent.” The reverend then laid out the blueprint for achievement. “Strength can be acquired by labor, wisdom by study, and purity by religion.” And in a final “stirring appeal” Tracy exclaimed that now was the time for “young men to be up and doing!”

It is interesting to note that Rev. Tracy’s lecture was delivered in the midst of the drive to raise new recruits. Much like the New Hampshire Sentinel’s editorial “A Word for Young Men,” which appeared just days before the March elections, this public lecture seems part of a strategy to inspire the young men of the community to support the war. Tracy placed this young generation into the larger historical narrative, emphasizing an urgency that came with momentous points in history. Also like the newspaper editorial, Tracy’s lecture demonstrated

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60 Ibid.
the flexibility of traditional institutions to meet a specific need at a specific time in regard to the war.

Public lectures could also help provide the local people of Keene with access to firsthand accounts of the efforts at the front. As local soldiers’ aid societies worked at raising funds and supplies, often in conjunction with the Sanitary and Christian Commissions, visiting representatives could provide updates on the relief efforts’ receiving end. In January 1862 Rev. Frederick Knapp of Walpole, New Hampshire, lectured at the Town Hall. Knapp had “been in Washington and among the camps the last five months at work in connection with the Sanitary Commission.” He informed the audience about “the condition and needs of our troops” and assured the people of Keene of the success of the Sanitary Commission’s work, showing “conclusively the substantial results both as regards to the health and the comfort of the army which have accrued from the establishment of the Commission.”61 Similarly in 1863 a Rev. Mr. Ware presented a lecture on “Amusements for Our Soldiers in Our Hospitals.” The advertisement for his lecture explained that he was “well qualified by frequent visits to our camps and hospitals, to speak on the subject which lies so near his heart.”62

But perhaps the most profound function public lectures played during this time was enlightening the people of Keene on issues of emancipation. Changes in federal war policies, beginning as early as 1861, forced Northerners to confront the issues of emancipation more bluntly. Mounting numbers of free blacks, or “contrabands,” had created unique and unprecedented circumstances for the federal government in many Union-occupied regions of the

61 NHS, 1/9/62.
62 NHS, 11/12/63.
In September 1862 Rev. John Dudley, an agent of the “National Freedmen’s Association,” gave a public lecture at the Town Hall. He provided a history of the “Freedmen,” or contrabands, in the vicinity of Hilton Head, South Carolina, where actions were being taken to assist recently escaped slaves. Dudley described “the physical and moral condition of the thousands of this new element now seeking the protection of our flag.” He described “their destitution, moral habits, ways of living, and capabilities of improvement,” as well as “their insatiable desire to learn and read, and their willingness to labor and general deportment since their release from bondage and the horrors of the lash.” Dudley explained that a number of Northern men and women were now engaged as teachers and that the “freedmen” were “extremely eager to attend the schools.” He also reported that the free blacks he witnessed were “for the most part religious” and that “no vile songs are heard among them, neither was profanity or drunkenness witnessed.”

Dudley’s presence in Keene was important for two reasons. First his lecture provided firsthand information about this new and radical undertaking. His descriptions of the free blacks as eager to learn and religiously upstanding may have helped allay inherent anxieties of this lily-white Northern community regarding African Americans, particularly as a people who also cherished both religion and education. Dudley’s words helped lay the groundwork of the notion of the United States as a post-emancipation society. The previous decades of antislavery rhetoric and proposals had been largely hypothetical. But by late 1862 the idea of an America with

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63 NHS, 9/18/62.
millions of newly-freed blacks was becoming an increasingly imminent reality. Public lectures like these provided far-removed communities such as Keene with the latest “useful information” in a rapidly changing situation, helping them to reassess their views on both the war effort and the future of their nation. As the Republican newspaper the *New Hampshire Sentinel* helped promote the efficacy of emancipation on a political level, public lectures like these helped the people of Keene understand and adjust to the social effects of the action, often working on an emotional level. Thus, we see here again how two traditional local institutions can act in a complementary manner to foster nationalism.

Secondly, the lecture provided access to the people of Keene to become active participants in the movement. During Dudley’s presentation an appeal was made to the people for supplies, including any “old garments, bonnets, spectacles, school books &c” that people would like to donate. Once again it was the local religious community that would provide the logistical infrastructure for this charity. A committee was formed with a representative of each of the town’s churches to coordinate the “collection and transmission” of all donations. And these efforts, again performed locally through traditional institutions, provided another connection to a collective national endeavor.

In January 1863, a week following the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, the citizens of Keene were again treated to a lecture that dealt specifically with the subject of race in regard to the war. Local attorney and active community leader Farnum Lane presented a lecture at the Town Hall about “Human Progress and American Liberty.” A correspondent who attended the lecture related that it reflected “the warm gushing of a patriot’s heart whose pulses

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64 Ibid..
throb with the harmony of the Union. His eulogy of liberty and his glowing reference to the Emancipation Proclamation elicited the most hearty applause.” The reporter for the town’s Republican newspaper concluded that the “lecture evinced a knowledge of history, a power of generalization, and a scholarly polish that would do honor to a statesman.”

And two weeks later the same podium at Keene’s Town Hall was occupied by the gifted and rising young star Miss Anna E. Dickinson of Philadelphia. Dickinson’s oratorical skills were so powerful, in fact, that the New Hampshire Republican State Committee had commissioned her for a series of lectures on their behalf in support of the March elections. The appeal most likely argued for the support of emancipation as one of the appropriate measures taken by the Republicans to prosecute the war. As the engagement approached the Sentinel proclaimed that “Miss D. has the reputation of being a ready and accomplished speaker, and fully understands the subject upon which she treats. We bespeak for her a cordial reception and a full house.”

An effective lecturer could not only articulate a clear message but could also touch the audience on an emotional level. This was certainly true for Anna Dickinson who was “renowned for her ability to electrify audiences with her impassioned rhetoric.” As Melinda Lawson states, Dickinson “captured the imagination and affection of the wartime Northern public” more than any other abolitionist speaker of her time. For one Keene resident, twenty-year-old Hattie Johnson, this was obviously the case. “I wish you could have heard a lecture given here last week by Miss Dickinson,” she told her friend James, then serving in the army. “She spoke so

65 NHS, 1/8/63.
67 NHS, 1/8/62.
68 Lawson, Patriot Fires, 148-149.
earnestly and so nobly, not losing one bit of her womanhood, but as if she had all these noble
earnest thoughts pressing upon her and must speak them.” For Hattie this connection seemed to
be in large part because she was a woman. Roughly the same age, Hattie may have seen much
of herself in Anna Dickinson. “I don’t believe in women’s lecturing as a general thing,” she
confessed, “but if I could talk as she talked I would go myself and tell it to all men… She is
young, pretty, refined, and highly cultivated, a true woman, and dares to speak the truth, more
than most men would do.” Dickinson’s “lecture was a beautiful earnest appeal for Liberty and
for Liberty’s champions.” And her appeal worked, as Hattie admitted that, “This letter is one of
the results [of the lecture], not that she told us to write letters but somehow it made me want to
write to you as my only war correspondent, and I wanted to tell you about it.” Hattie’s
enthusiasm gives us insight into the emotional potency of some public lectures and how they
may have been a powerful influence on public opinion and actions.

And at war’s end, on April 10, 1865, Anna Dickinson once again lectured to a “crowded
house” in the Keene Town Hall. Her program, titled “A Glance at the Future,” addressed the
importance of “maintaining the policy of elevating the masses of both the black and white races
in the South,” and promoted the concept of giving African Americans “the right of suffrage.”
Two weeks later Frederick Douglass occupied the same stage to lecture to the people of Keene,
advocating equal rights for African Americans. So, as lecture topics had adapted to reflect the
changing exigencies of the war, they were now shifting to address challenges of the future,
helping the residents of Keene to transition to a new postwar concept of nation. A familiar
format to the residents of Keene public lectures represent yet another traditional institution that

69 Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 1/25/63, Elliot Papers.
70 NHS, 4/13/65.
71 Ibid.
was an important element in building nationalism, helping foster a sense of connection to fellow Americans as the nation collectively dealt with the changing nature and scope of the war.

**New England Identity**

*Illustration 4-3. From 1754 illustration “Join or Die.”*

As discussed in Chapter 1, by the eve of the Civil War New Englanders had developed a profound sense of regional identity. As “New Englanders” the people here had a long history from which to draw upon, which included culture, traditions and values that helped them identify what it meant to be an American. During the war these connections would be evident in both thought and actions, and may have facilitated a greater ability and willingness to look beyond state affiliation to cooperate on a regional and national level. (Illustration 4-3)

*Technology & Regional Ties in New England*

Along with cultural and historical ties, New Englanders were also bonded by sheer physical proximity. All six New England states are contained in an area roughly 70,000 square miles with no major physical obstacles impeding travel between them. (In comparison, neighboring New York State alone comprises approximately 55,000 square miles.) And this
physical closeness was enhanced dramatically by technological innovations introduced during the antebellum decades, namely the telegraph and railroad.

In fact, during these years, technology had emerged as an increasingly integral ligament of American nationalism, as it facilitated the country’s growth and progress. For example, in an 1863 issue of *The Family Christian Almanac* there appeared an article entitled “The Value of Union” in which the writer uses machinery as a metaphor for the nation itself. “The wheels and cylinders and shafts and bands and boilers and furnaces and pipes of a vast and complicated machinery, when lying on the bank of a stream which is to put them in motion, are capable of no achievement.” However, when they are “united, adjusted, and moving together, they will work wonders, and perform the service of more than a thousand men…Here are images of a great nation divided and united.”72 Another example of metaphorical integration of technology and union comes from Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who compares the popular public lecture circuit of the 1850s to that of a textile factory loom. The traveling lecturer, “moving to and fro, [serves as] a living shuttle to weave together this new web of national civilization.”73

By the mid-nineteenth century telegraph lines allowed for rapid communication between most of the American states, furthering connections between different regions. In 1860 work began on a transcontinental telegraph line connecting the West Coast with the rest of the country. The timing of the project, which coincided with secession, made the telegraph another apt symbol for the Union itself. The *Family Christian Almanac* described the transcontinental telegraph as thus: “One line of peace was drawn amid the tumult of war, one cord of union was thrown across the continent amid the distractions of 1861 – the Pacific telegraph” and “we

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73 Scott, “Popular Lecture,” 808.
believe it will stand...binding the continent in a bond of commercial amity and Christian fellowship.” 74

The first telegraph line in Keene began operating in 1851, part of a larger line running between Boston and Burlington, Vermont. 75 Its presence revolutionized communication between the New Hampshire community and fellow New Englanders providing a sense of real connection to heretofore distant places. 76 The telegraph so excited the imagination of Keene resident William Orne White that he wrote to his friend in Salem, Massachusetts, “Did you know that we in Keene are nearer to Boston now than you in Salem are?” In reality Salem was only ten miles from Boston compared to Keene which was 90 miles away. However, as White explained, “It is so, for we have the telegraph in full operation. For twenty-five cents we can send a message to Boston.” Orne even went so far as to imagine, “If you only had a telegraph from Boston to Salem, we would try talking together, to see how it would seem.” 77

The importance of the telegraph in the public consciousness can be seen in the very first proclamation issued by the Cheshire County Soldiers Aid Society. When it was initially formed in June 1861 the women of the organization proclaimed, “As the electric wires that span our cities converge from the circumference to a common centre, so that no chord can be struck that the whole instrument does not vibrate, so, all these gifts offered on the altar of our country and

75 KHC, Upper Ashuelot, 93.
76 While cost prohibitive to most people the telegraph’s most profound impact came through its relationship with newspapers. “The emergence of the Associated Press (AP) after 1848 as the dominant news agency in the United States was due in part to the AP’s close relationship with the telegraph network.”, Christopher Sterling, "Telegraph". In Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications. (Oxford: Elsevier Science & Technology, 2003).
77 White, William Orne White, 98.
combined into a united whole, may yet swell the grand music of – ‘Liberty and Union, now and forever, ONE and inseparable’”

Along with the telegraph Keene experienced tremendous change with the advent of the railroad. The first line to the town opened in 1848. By the time of the Civil War Keene was connected to the outside world by a massive network of rail lines that sprawled across the country in every direction, with the vast majority of track mileage concentrated in Northern states. And according to one historian, by the time of the Civil War “In New England the 4’8 1/2” gauge was almost universal” allowing freer travel within the region.79

78 NHS, 6/10/61.; The news from the front came largely through the wires as well. For example the July 25, 1861 issue of the New Hampshire Sentinel included the following: “Great Battle at Bull’s Run – The Rebels Driven to Manassas – Fearful Carnage on Both Sides… Mr. Calef, the telegraph operator here, has kindly handed us the following dispatch from his father, who is in the Cheshire Light Guards: Washington July 24 – We have returned from the fight. It was a terrible battle, and our boys behaved nobly. John L. Rice was killed, Geo. S. Heaton wounded in foot and could not be brought off; Daniel Whittemore wounded in the leg and doing well. We had fearful odds against us. Our boys are all anxious to try again; The news of Keene resident Frank Leverett’s death reached his family via telegraph as well. “I must write today to tell you about Kate… Her brother is dead. They received a telegraph message yesterday noon, announcing the sad event which they had hardly anticipated.” Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 10/4/63.

79 Hermon King Murphey, “The Northern Railroads and the Civil War.” The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. 5, 3 (Dec., 1918), 324.
Illustration 4-4. Keene, New Hampshire 1861 – Note the rail line running across Main St.
(Dickinson College)

Within a week of its opening in 1848 the Cheshire County Railroad ran two daily trains from Keene to Boston and back. Before the advent of the railroad, the one-way, ninety-mile journey between these two points consumed twelve hours and could take even longer if affected by poor weather or seasonal conditions.\textsuperscript{80} By the 1860s the time was cut to three hours and twenty-five minutes. In fact, an 1864 \textit{Sentinel} newspaper article promoted a nineteenth-century version of a “commuter” line, in which a person could leave Keene in the morning, arrive in Boston at 7:25 A.M., “in season to transact a whole day’s business, and return [to Keene] in the evening.”\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{80} Wilber, \textit{The Repertory}, Vol.1, 12 (1925), 593.
\textsuperscript{81} NHS, 5/12/64.
Illustration 4-5. Keene railroad depot as it appeared during the war. The building to the left was childhood home of Cynthia Dunbar, mother of Henry David Thoreau. The depot was razed in 1910 but the Dunbar residence still stands today.

(Keene Public Library)

The rail lines through Keene provided a vibrant connection to neighboring New England states. Not only were the rails used to transport freight, but people too. Middle and upper-class residents made wide use of the convenience to travel. Private correspondence reveals that many residents made frequent trips to neighboring towns and New England states for business, social engagements, schooling, and family visits. These trips could even be as short as an afternoon.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{82} Some examples of travel: Hattie Johnson described a day trip to Winchester, New Hampshire, a 25 mile round trip by rail. “Kate and Frank Leverett and I went down to Winchester last Thursday in a snow storm by invitation of Dea. Buffum of that town to a sugaring...Mr. Buffum met us at the depot in W[inchester]” After a day of socializing and playing games the group returned that same evening. Hattie Johnson to James Elliot 4/7/61. ; “Louise went to Keene yesterday and I went up on P.M. train to come home with her.” Letter of Jno to Dear Siter & all from Troy, NH to Keene, NH March 10, 1859, NHH; Keene resident Kate Leverett attended boarding school in Needham, Massachusetts. Along with using railroad travel between Keene and Needham, she also made frequent visits to nearby Boston and surrounding towns by train. On one trip from Keene to Needham she wrote “‘Charlie Fox came
On other occasions the rail companies offered free or reduced fare to facilitate travel. For example in 1862 Keene hosted a gathering of Sunday Schools for a Fourth of July celebration. It was announced that “Besides the half dozen schools here there will probably be some eight or ten from out of town. Three full schools are expected from Winchendon [Massachusetts].” The owners of the railroad offered to “carry passengers for less than half the usual fare.” Following the successful event one witness reported “The procession as it was escorted to the depot, after the close of the exercises, made quite an imposing appearance – the long line of children in their neat holiday dresses, with banners floating in the breeze, marching to the music of the band, was a gratifying spectacle.” And in similar manner leading up to the 1864 Annual Cheshire County Fair it was announced, “The railroads will extend their usual courtesy by carrying visitors at reduced fare.”

Rail lines also afforded people the luxury of temporarily relocating their place of residence. An 1862 letter from Keene resident Harriet Elliot suggests that many citizens of the town lived in other places for part of the year, reflecting perhaps familial connections in fellow New England states, as well as underscoring the ease of travel by rail. Mrs. Elliot writes, “Keene down in the cars with me…” Kate Leverett to James Elliot September 1859. On another occasion she wrote “Mr. Buttle did not leave [us] until we were safely seated in the cars with books, paper, cherries, peaches, cakes, etc., etc....” Kate Leverett to James Elliot July 15, 1860. “Emeline...is now teaching in Massachusetts and returns home (to Keene) every fortnight and consequently I will have the pleasure of seeing her as often.” Kittredge to James Elliot 3/6/63. Keene resident Jennie Gray writes, “I expect to go to Vermont sometime in the early part of July. After making visits among my relations in that region I shall probably go to Chicago. I presume I shall go in August or the first of September.” Jennie Gray to J. Elliot 6/13/63.; From the Diary of Keene native Isiah Robbins: “Nov. 15, 1864, Took the 11:15 train for Fitchburg [Massachusetts]. Arrived there at 12”40 slept all the P.M”; “Nov. 16, 1864, Took the 9:30 train for Keene, arrived there at 11:30.” Diary of Isiah Robbins 1864-1865, NHHS; And an 1863 newspaper account of a mini crime spree reveals another example of local rail travel. “A man calling himself Henry A. Barnham” broke into and robbed two houses in East Sullivan, New Hampshire. After which he “was followed to Keene by Mr. Buckminster (one of the victims) who found him on board the morning train of cars headed for Boston and intermediate stations.” NHS 7/2/63.

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83 NHS, 7/3/62.
84 NHS, 3/10/62.
85 NHS, 9/8/64.
is to be somewhat deserted this Winter. Dr. Ingersol and family have gone to Brattleboro, [Vermont] to spend the winter. Mr. & Mrs. Fiske are packing for the move to Boston – the former having been discharged from military service…Mrs. Wheeler and daughter are going away for a long visit. Also Mrs. Bois and daughter are expected to go to Charlestown, Mass the first of January to be gone the remainder of the winter. So you see a number of houses will be dark these long evenings.”

To New Englanders the railroad made Boston, Massachusetts a literal hub of transportation and commerce. An 1857 geography book explained that “[Boston] is the centre of the railroad system of New England, and from it the iron band diverges to all parts.” And for the people of Keene the connection to Boston become even more important due to the fact that there was no direct rail line between Keene and the state capitol of Concord, New Hampshire. A line running from Keene to Concord was proposed in 1851, but projected unprofitability led to the plan’s abandonment. In fact, in order to travel by rail from Keene to Concord, NH one had to pass south through Massachusetts for almost 30 miles before reentering New Hampshire. Thus, when the war began all New Hampshire regiments leaving Keene had to pass through Massachusetts in order to muster in at Concord, New Hampshire. And from there they were sent to Boston for transport south. Keene newspapers contained glowing reviews of New Hampshire

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86 Harriet Elliot to James, 11/19/62.
87 Thomas Prescott, Volume of the World, (J. Miller, 1857), 140.
88 Griffin, History of Keene, 450.
men from their fellow New Englanders in Boston as they passed through the city. (Illustration 4-6)

Illustration 4-6. Portion of original 1864 U.S. Railroad Map showing rail lines of central New England. Center dot denotes Keene, NH

(Appleton’s Publishing, 1864)

As wartime relief efforts expanded the rail lines served as a conduit for funneling supplies from greater New England to the Port of Boston. When the United States Sanitary
Commission was formed New England was designated as a single branch under the name of the New England Women’s Auxiliary, which soon came to be called the “Boston Branch.” And districts within this organization were determined not by state or county, but by rail lines. So under this structure the people of Keene became teamed with towns in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Vermont as one district within the New England branch.

New Englanders

While the telegraph and railroads facilitated cohesion between Keene, New Hampshire, and greater New England, another important factor contributing to a regional identity comes from the makeup of the town itself. While Keene was a well-established town with a lengthy history, the 1860 census reveals that 35% of its residents were born in a state other than New Hampshire. However, the same census also records that 90% of Keene’s total population at that time was born in New England. Thus, despite the large number of transplanted residents, the town was overwhelmingly made up of New Englanders. And, as Stephanie Kermes explains, the unique bonds between New Englanders allowed them to “share a collective identity despite political, class, geographic, and religious differences within the region.” And even “New Englanders from different religious sects or emerging political parties were able to forge shared ideas about regional and national identity…”

And these transplanted New Englanders were often important and influential members of the Keene community. Some notable examples include Rev. James Renouf, Pastor of the St

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89 Worneley, United States Sanitary Commission: A Sketch of its Purposes and Work, 47-48, 279. “At the council held in Washington, last November, the plan of organization of the Boston Branch was thought superior to all others, and we have consequently adopted it. This is the division of the country into sections, these sections being determined, not by county lines (although these are often most convenient), but by lines of transportation, rivers, and railroads.”

90 Kermes, Creating American Identity, 5.
James Church, who had moved to Keene in 1859 after serving at St Stephens Church in Boston. Likewise Rev. James Hamilton of the Congregational Church was a Massachusetts native and Amherst College graduate before moving to Keene just prior to the outbreak of the war.

Reverend William Orne White was also a Massachusetts native who spent most of his life in the Bay State before accepting the position at the Keene Unitarian Church in 1851. Thomas Hale had been born in Massachusetts, relocated to Vermont, and then moved to Keene in 1859 to become editor of the high profile Republican weekly the *New Hampshire Sentinel*. And Chauncey Wyman, popular young director of the Keene Musical Institute and a ubiquitous presence at many community functions, had been born in Rockingham, Vermont and had moved to Keene in 1860.

The outbreak of war would see connections between these New England States, particularly Massachusetts, both strengthened and utilized. New England’s regional identity can be seen as the nation mobilized for war. In January of 1861, as the first Southern states began seceding from the Union, Massachusetts governor John Andrew’s first instinct was to look to his fellow New Englanders for solidarity. He sent delegates to speak with the governors of all the New England states. Their mission was to “acquaint them with his determination to prepare the active militia of Massachusetts for instant service, and to invite their cooperation.” And six months later, when mobilization began in earnest, a traveler wrote back to Keene and assured the people that in “Boston, New Hampshire, and Vermont there is but one voice, and that is for the Union at all hazards.”

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92 Proper, *History First Congregational Church*, 128.
During the Civil War seventy-five Keene men served their country in regiments from other states, while an additional seven enlisted in the United States Regular Army. Of the seventy-five Keene men that served in state regiments other than New Hampshire, seventy-three enlisted with New England regiments, predominantly units from Massachusetts and Vermont. So with each enlistee, Keene friends and family and friends back home made direct personal connections with these non-New Hampshire regiments.

Even in 1861, before the incentives of “bounty wars,” there was seemingly no overwhelming pressure for these native Granite State men to enlist in New Hampshire regiments exclusively. When, in November of that year, a recruiting office opened up in downtown Keene for a Rhode Island Battery, the newspaper exclaimed “Ho! For the Artillery,” explaining that Rhode Island’s Governor William Sprague was raising “a regiment of artillery for government service.” The recruiting officer was a resident of Providence, Rhode Island but hailed originally from New Hampshire. The newspaper editor urged that this was a “fine opportunity for our young men who wish to enter the artillery service.” Similar support was shown for a Regular Army recruiter one month later. “The inducements are quite favorable,” claimed the local paper, and “the recruiting officer seems to be a gentleman of fine character, and we hope he will meet with success among the loyal young men of this vicinity.” Upon hearing of his enlistment in the 20th Massachusetts Volunteers, Daniel Elliot wrote to his nephew and Keene native James, “In such extremity shall none but mercenaries be sent to uphold the banner of the Union & enforce the right? Shall the infatuated South send forth the choicest of her sons to deadly conflict with an enthusiasm worthy of a better cause & the North hold back?” he asked.

Compiled from data in Griffin, History of Keene, 521-523.
96 NHS, 11/7/61.
97 NHS, 12/5/61.
“Thousands have answered NO! – You have answered no; & the composition of your Regiment & of others shows that some of the best of New England is up, & her cherished sons prepared to do battle for the right” (emphasis added).

With each out-of-state enlistment came connections between family and friends of a soldier and a state other than New Hampshire. The Battle of Ball’s Bluff provides one example of how these otherwise less than obvious ties could affect those at home. This engagement, which occurred on October 21-22, 1861, resulted in some 1000 Union casualties and was one of the first major setbacks for the Northern cause. Despite the fact that no New Hampshire units were even present at the battle, among the missing was 18-year-old Frank Hatch of Keene, who was serving in the 15th Massachusetts Volunteers. And just days after the battle young Keene native Hattie Johnson confessed to a friend “How horribly the Mass. 15th was cut up at Ball’s Bluff.” She explained, “I am much interested in that regiment as I have several acquaintances in it, several young men went from Northboro, [Massachusetts], one or two of whom were severely wounded and several narrowly escaped by swimming.” A similar situation occurred in 1863 when Keene resident Charles Cross was reported as a casualty of the Gettysburg Campaign. He was captured in Virginia while serving in the 1st Rhode Island Cavalry. Thus it was not merely losses to New Hampshire units that directly affected the people of the town.

Conversely, outside enlistments served in New Hampshire service as well. In the summer of 1861, for example, a regimental band was formed in Keene for the 2nd New

98 Daniel Elliot to James Elliot, 12/21/62, Elliot Papers.
100 Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, October 29, 1861, Elliot Papers.
101 NHS, 8/20/63.
Hampshire Volunteers. When they left for the front in August, one quarter of the twenty man ensemble was comprised of Massachusetts men.\textsuperscript{102}

Connections between New England states could also come through familial or business connections or, in one particular case, both. In 1861 Keene manufacturer Solon Stone Wilkinson obtained a substantial military contract to produce leather goods. He worked in conjunction with his brother W.H Wilkenson of Springfield, Massachusetts to produce all of the accoutrements for the Connecticut volunteer soldiers.\textsuperscript{103}

Fraternal organizations provided another interstate link between New Englanders. When the first chapter of the Freemasons was established in Keene the official charter was granted by the Masons of Boston, the vice president of which was none other than Paul Revere, the famous patriot of the Revolution. And when fallen Keene soldier and Odd Fellow member William Taft was laid to rest in Keene, fellow Odd Fellow delegates from New Hampshire and Vermont performed the burial rituals.\textsuperscript{104} During the Fourth of July celebration of 1861, the Keene Brass Band performed in Rutland, Vermont. And conversely, the music for the 1864 annual Keene Firemen’s Parade was provided by the Ashburnham Brass Band from Ashburnham, Massachusetts.

\textit{Allegiance}

So what did this all mean, this “New England identity?” If we accept the idea that New Englanders of this time had been raised with a unique sense regional awareness, and knowing that that nine out of ten citizens of Keene were native New Englanders, we may consider two

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102 & Griffin, History of Keene, 481-485. \\
103 & NHS, 5/16/61. \\
104 & NHS, 5/29/62. \\
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potential possibilities. First, due to an ideological belief in their stewardship of the Revolutionary legacy, when Southern secession occurred in 1861 there was an innate and heightened sense of responsibility among many New Englanders to secure the future of the Union. In fact, this was the exact sentiment British reporter Edward Dicey observed as he traveled through the Civil War North. He explains that there was, among New Englanders, “an earnestness, possibly a ferocity, about the war one hardly comes across in the more modern states.” He claims that “in the West, it is probable that if you could persuade the inhabitants that Secession was advantageous to their interest, the Union feeling would die away in great measure.” However, “in New England the sense of personal interest has little, if anything, to do with the passion for the war. These causes operate to create a very different kind of public sentiment in the East from that which prevails in the West. The name of compromise is hateful to the New Englander; and, to the Puritan mind, there is but one issue to this conflict, possible or permissible, and that is the victory of the Union.”

Second, in an era so often associated with “states’ rights,” the rapidly expanding powers of the federal administration was often problematical. While most Americans had felt a kinship with fellow countrymen and women in other states due to common history and heritage, the crisis of war had altered this view of nationalism. Now Northerners were looking increasingly more to the federal government as the means of preserving the Union. With such responsibility there came a tendency to conflate the concepts of nation and state. National identity now came to be defined by an allegiance to centralized authority beyond state lines. Perhaps New

Englanders’ sense of regional loyalty and identity, in some way, facilitated a more natural transition for them to look beyond state to national allegiances.

James Elliot, a member of one of the most prominent and respected families of Keene, provides us with a clear explanation of his views on this concept of allegiance. In 1862, while a student at Harvard, he was asked to write an essay on the following: “Allegiance to our Native State and to the United States; in case of a contest between these two duties, which might be held the superior?” To James Elliot the issue was based entirely on the Constitution. “If the Constitution of these United States be, as I presume will not be denied, the Instrument of the people there can in reality be no such thing as a Sovereign State,” Elliot explains. “The States are but communities of the same body-politic, organized for the more convenient adjustment of local matters and better protection & advancement in the National Government of local interests.”

In what might be seen as a reflection of many New Englanders around him, the 19-year-old explains, “The people regard their instrument, the Constitution, as no compact but as the stronghold of their rights & privileges, indestructible & insubvertible except by their own act.” And while state constitutions were also “instruments of the people” that embodied rights and privileges, Elliot makes an important distinction by claiming that “there are [no state powers] superseding any of the powers vested by the Constitution of the Union in the General Government.”

He declares, “It is the General [Federal] Government…which makes one a citizen [and] which makes us a nation.” The United States was founded as a federal republic, and not a mere

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106 Harvard University essay by James Elliot, Elliot Papers
107 Ibid.
confederacy of states, and there must be a permanency to its existence. And as such, “The States, to be better protected from foreign nations and from each other, to secure to the people the glorious and unequalled advantages of a Federal Republic have instituted a general government and invested it with certain of their rights & powers as sovereign and independent States and have become now no longer sovereign and independent and all amenable to the General Government.” To James Elliot it was clear; the federal government was the supreme power, and all Americans owed their ultimate allegiance to the nation state.\textsuperscript{108}

By no means was New England a monolithic body. As Kevin Phillips explains in his book \textit{The Cousins’ War}, factors such as immigration and religious affiliations could and did cause internal political tensions within the region.\textsuperscript{109} The state of Connecticut even experienced a wartime peace movement led by a minority of Democrats.\textsuperscript{110} However, overall, New England did maintain a consistent majority support for the Lincoln Administration and the war effort throughout the four years of conflict. In the 1860 presidential election the top eight states with the highest percentage of Lincoln votes included all six New England states. In fact, Vermont cast the highest percentage of votes in the nation for Lincoln with 76\%.\textsuperscript{111} And overall this support was maintained throughout the war, even as the relationship between the people and the federal government changed over time.

\begin{footnotesize}
\item[108] Ibid.
\item[110] John E. Talmadge, “A Peace Movement in Civil War Connecticut” New England Quarterly, Vol. 37, 3, (Sep. 1964). These peace demonstrations were often met with stern and sometimes violent resistance by fellow Connecticut residents. Talmadge states that the “peace agitations were the expression of resolute minority” and that “As a whole the state stood for war.”
\item[111] Phillips, \textit{Cousins’ War}, 411.
\end{footnotesize}
Chapter Conclusion

By late 1862 the war was changing. Expanding federal war measures and issues of race were now becoming more visible components of the war for Union. Locally in Keene Thomas Hale and his Republican writers at the New Hampshire Sentinel used their newspaper to maximum effect, drumming up support for the Lincoln Administration in the face of opposition from the Democratic Cheshire Republican. The Sentinel’s role as shaper of local public opinion was even more vital during this period of rapid change regarding the war.

The longstanding tradition of public lectures also adapted to meet the changing times. Long providing access to “useful information” for the people of Keene, public lectures now provided vital war news from the front, helping people to understand and appreciate their role in the larger national picture.

And finally, underlying the entire war effort was a common regional identity that connected New Englanders through tradition and interdependence. For the people of Keene these ties would be strengthened and utilized during the war. And as the war aims became more complex this regional identity may have helped the majority of New Englanders maintain allegiance to the Lincoln Administration and faith in expanding federal powers.
Chapter 5
Military Culture at Home

As the nation went to war, civilians on the home front witnessed the rise of a ubiquitous “military culture,” which quickly made its way into numerous aspects of their daily lives. Their newfound relationship with the armed forces bolstered wartime nationalism that emphasized both a sense of urgency and a strident political commitment to saving the Union. The army was the means of preserving the Union, and its importance brought a large percentage of the community into contact with military themes, ideas, and systems, often in unprecedented and even unexpected ways.

This nationalistic military culture was most evident in the work and thoughts of the women of Keene, as well as in the town’s commercial establishments. As the ravages of the war brought about an escalating sense of uncertainty, women continued to turn to each other in cooperative efforts: privately, through traditional social networks of support, and publicly through benevolent organizations. In both cases they developed a distinct militaristic nationalism, which, in turn, helped them articulate their own sense of purpose in the national crisis as active, politically-minded participants.

And finally, this militaristic nationalism had a profound and notable impact on Keene’s commercial and business world. Local business advertising made bold and deliberate use of military and national themes, and the war provided opportunities for the sale of a variety of new products. Thus, while operating through local traditional institutions and organizations, this
thread of nationalistic military culture helped Keene citizens strengthen connections to millions of their fellow countrymen.

**The Women of Keene and Their Country**

Throughout the North, as thousands of men enlisted in the service and left for the front, the impact of their absence was noticeable to the people at home. As the war progressed, the dearth of men was felt in Keene, New Hampshire, as well. In early 1863 Harriet Elliot told her son James, “I had a few ladies to tea Friday eve. . . . It is easy to gather a company of ladies these days, but oh such destitution of gentlemen is really heartbreaking I dare say to the lonely fair sex.” She then qualified her remarks, writing, “But then they ought to be happy to think they can say that so many of our good men are in such a good cause.”¹¹²

So how did the women of Keene cope with the absence of loved ones who had gone off to war? As a number of historians have shown, nineteenth-century America was a world in which white middle-class women commonly formed networks of support with other women -- what Nancy Cott has described as a “sisterhood.”¹¹³ Historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg explains, “Within this secure and empathetic world women could share sorrow, anxieties, and joys, confident that other women had experienced similar emotions.”¹¹⁴ So when faced with the prolonged absence of sons, brothers, and husbands, it was natural for women to turn to other

¹¹² Harriet Elliot to James, 2/10/63, Elliot Papers.
women for support. And it was partly through these traditional gender-based networks that women affirmed their own sense of loyalty to the nation and commitment to the national cause.

One particular situation that drew women together during the war was the mutual experience of having sons in the service. Such was the case for Harriet Elliot and Catherine Dinsmoor, whose boys had enlisted in the 44th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment. Harriet’s letters often express a sense of mutual comfort in sharing maternal anxiety and concerns about their boys. “Mrs. Dinsmoor came home on Tuesday, the day before the Reg left, and came in to see me immediately after I came home,” she told her son soon after his departure with the regiment. “I have seen her quite often since our return and there is a very warm and mutual interest, of course, between us, and it is very pleasant to us both, as she has expressed and I certainly feel it.” Harriet hoped that a similar bond was also shared between their two boys, writing, “I trust there is not a lack of interest between our sons.”115 A short time later she wrote to James, “Mrs. Dinsmoor had a letter from [her son Charlie] the same date of yours and it came in the same mail. By the way do you ever see each other?” She told James, “Mrs. D. will send a parcel in the box which we are preparing to get off sometime this week,” adding, “Remember me to Charlie when you see him.”116

These letters also helped the women stay apprised of their sons’ activities at the front. On one occasion Harriet Elliot told her son about a letter Mrs. Dinsmoor had shared with her that included “a brief account of your voyage etc., closing with your embarkation in the cars for [New Berne, North Carolina]. It is quite amusing and by the way I wish I had them all…as they would be a history that would certainly be entertaining in a future day.” Harriet and Mrs.

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115 Harriet Elliot to James, 11/7/62, Elliot Papers.
116 Harriet Elliot to James, 11/23/62, Elliot Papers.
Dinsmoor met “somewhere almost daily – She comes to see me three or four times a week and reads [Charlie’s] letters to me and I return the compliment by doing the same with yours...” More than mere social engagements, these meetings served a vital purpose, allowing the women at home to commiserate and comfort one another during this time of angst and uncertainty. As Harriet Elliot explains, “You may imagine the real pleasure we take in comparing notes. Though I fear you cannot fully realize the great comfort we enjoy in ‘thinking’ aloud together.”  

In another example, Mrs. Han Duren and Electa Wilcox bonded when their two sons were captured and subsequently imprisoned together in 1864. Mrs. Duren writes, “My Dear Mrs. Wilcox, Agreeable to my own feeling and I trust to yours I wish to return my sympathy to you.” She confesses, “My heart goes out towards those who have loved ones in the Army and especially those who have Dear ones who are suffering in prisons. Oh that they could be set free and come home to their homes and friends once more. And [I] pray to our Heavenly Father that they may be released speedily.” Duren’s words reveal a sense of desperation and helplessness, which she wanted to share with Mrs. Wilcox due to their mutual circumstance. “Sometimes my mind gets so wrought thinking about our son that I cannot have it so any longer.” She confessed that, although she did not know Charles Wilcox personally, “I feel interested in him now that he is with our son Lieut. Duren.” She then flashed her hatred of the Confederates saying, “If they have been in prison a long time I think they will understand what the rebels are.” She finished with words of comfort for her fellow anxious mother. “My wish is, Mrs. Wilcox, that your son may soon come home and be your comfort. And may the Lord keep you and Bless you and yours now and Evermore is the Prayer of your friend.”

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117 Harriet Elliot to James, 11/19/62, Elliot Papers. Arthur was also Harriet Elliot’s son. At that time he was also serving in the 44th Massachusetts Regiment along with his brother James.
118 Mrs. H. Duren to Mrs. Wilcox, 6/19/64, Wilcox Papers.
As women commiserated on the home front, their connections to loved ones in the army drew them increasingly into the world of military matters, a world which had traditionally been a masculine realm. To the people at home the army came to represent the future of the Union itself, and with such importance placed on the armed forces, a ubiquitous military culture, in turn, began to make its way into almost every facet of civilian life. Between local enlistments, relief efforts, and maintaining support for the cause, people on the home front became aware and knowledgeable with military affairs as this generation had never before. And this was true for women as well.

Even the traditional craft of sewing took on new meaning once the war began, as women responded to military necessity. For a December 1861 meeting of the Soldier’s Aid Society it was announced that “Those [women] who have sewing machines are invited to bring them.” The goal of the meeting was the completion of one thousand haversacks for the 6th New Hampshire Volunteer Regiment. The sewing of the haversacks (standard issue bags to carry army rations) brought the women of Keene into direct participation with military supply and the enormous scale and challenge of wartime mass production. They also learned that the soldiers preferred dark colored haversacks over ones made of white canvas due to the fact that “white haversacks on blue coats will serve as good targets for the enemy to shoot at.”

Even the simple design of men’s shirts now had to be adapted to meet the considerations of military service. In June 1863 Soldiers’ Aid Society member and Keene resident Mary Hale wrote to Mrs. Mary Perley, Secretary of the New Hampshire SAS in Concord. “At the request of Mrs. Edwards, I send to you a pattern of a soldier’s dressing gown,” she explained. “Mrs.

119 Letter if Susanna Thompson to Miss Wilder, December 4, 1861, Records of the CCSAS.
Edwards wishes me to say to you that our shirt pattern does not materially differ from yours. It was, however, suggested to her at Portsmouth [New Hampshire] that, for greater convenience in using the gun, the pocket be placed higher on the shirt, well on, or partially above the breast, so that in moving the arm, the [gun] lock may not interfere with the pocket.”

So through the traditional practice of sewing the women were learning about, and adapting to, the use of infantry weaponry. And while sewing at one Soldiers’ Aid Society meeting several women sang a battle hymn written for the 44th Massachusetts Volunteers, in which two Keene men were then serving.

A simple stop at a local store could reinforce the connection between the military and the women at home in Keene. In June 1862 young Keene woman Jennie Gray walked into Buckminster’s Dry Goods with her friend Florence and “the first thing which we noticed was a very handsome coat, with any quantity of brass buttons with eagles on them hung up in the window.” The sight of the Union army coat greatly impressed the pair who “were very much delighted” and were “looking forward to seeing the coat further graced by the wearer” who was their good friend.

As the war progressed, many women did their best to keep apprised of the current state of military affairs through letters, newspaper accounts, and from recently returned soldiers. While doing so, many began to become accustomed to thinking in military terms and strategies. In late 1861 young Hattie Johnson vented her biting military appraisal of the Union defeat at Ball’s Bluff, Virginia, exclaiming, “Isn’t such blundering horrible? I wonder if we shall ever be able to

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120 Mary Hale to Mrs. Perley, June 1863, Records of the CCSAS.  
121 Records of the CCSAS, January 13, 1863. The song itself was actually penned by a Massachusetts woman whose husband was a captain in that unit, as described in Joseph C. Abdo, *On the Edge of History: The Story of the Dabney Family and their Influence on Atlantic History.* (Lisbon, Portugal: Tenth Island Editions, 2005), 321.  
122 Jennie Gray to James Elliot, 6/13/62, Elliot Papers.
carry out any plans successfully without such cruel, terrible mistakes, though that seems too soft a word for it.” And in 1862 Harriet Elliot and Catherine Dinsmoor were “much surprised” to hear of the movement of their sons’ regiment in North Carolina. The women spread a map out on a table in the Elliot home and tried to plot the unit’s next move but admitted they could not “find anything satisfactory in reference to your destiny, but trust to the future as we must, and hope for the best.”

In January 1863 Harriet told her son in a letter that his friend “B. Fox says he did not see a rebel on the late expedition and therefore did not fire at one.” She said she hoped “to hear more of your particular experience in your next [letter]. We have several general accounts in Newspapers – with the assurance that all was accomplished that was expected.” However, in Harriet’s military opinion, she suspected that the recent campaign was a “large cry for so little wool.” And a month later she commented on action near Charleston, South Carolina, where another one of her sons, Arthur, was serving in the army. “Stirring news is expected from that quarter now daily,” she reported, “I hope the public will not be disappointed but that their expectations may be fully realized.” She felt that “Everything about the country, political or military seems in somewhat of a snarl – and I think that it will be long before anything for its best good will be seen at present or ‘till we are more united.”

In early 1863 Lucy Smith wrote to her cousin Harriet in an effort to ease her angst regarding her boys. Her words reflect not simply a nurturing maternal assurance, but also an awareness of the latest military situation, as well as what was currently at stake. “I know how

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123 Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 10/29/61, Elliot Papers.
124 Harriet Elliot to James, 11/5/62, Elliot Papers.
125 Harriet Elliot to James, 1/1/63, Elliot Papers.
126 Harriet Elliot to James Elliot, 2/22/63, Elliot Papers.
much anxiety you must constantly feel about your dear boys,” she told her cousin, “indeed I never read news from N. Carolina without reference to them.” However, “You must keep up all the courage possible…It was a noble thing for them to go. They are under a good General & a good Col; all are well fitted for service, physically & morally. Their country needs them in her dire extremity.”127 Two months later she sent a similar message. “It must be a blessed relief to you that all the excitement about Gen Foster & the attack on Charleston is now over. I sympathize with you in all your fears & now congratulate you with all my heart on the comparative safety of your dear boys.”128 And commenting on the Confederate invasion into Pennsylvania in 1863 Lucy Smith wrote, “Was it not an impudent attempt? Still it was a retaliation we had reason to expect. I don’t think we are particularly near an end to our difficulties but I have as much faith & courage as ever.” In the same letter Lucy then turned her attention to the military theater of North Carolina writing, “I hope that the efforts that are made to crush the rebellion there will be blessed with success and the lives of our precious ones will be spared to see and enjoy the result of their labors without sacrifice of life or limb.”129

Military culture even found its way into the relief work of Keene’s women. When Susanna Thompson, secretary of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society, composed her annual report in June 1863, she recalled those female members of the society who had passed away during the previous two years. She confessed, “As I read over the list of members of this society, my eye involuntarily rests for a moment at the names of Mary W Hale, Mrs. Renouf, Mrs. Dort, Miss Elliot and Mrs. Axel Wilder.” The passing of these “companions and fellow laborers” reminded Susanna “of a touching incident on record of an officer in the French army,

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127 Lucy Smith to Harriet Elliot 2/8/63, Elliot Papers.
128 Lucy Smith to Harriet Elliot, 4/22/63, Elliot Papers.
129 Lucy Smith to Harriet Elliot, 6/25/63, Elliot Papers.
who fell upon the field of battle covered with honorable wounds.” The soldiers of the French officer’s regiment “had such a thrilling and grateful recollection of his excellence, that when the regimental roll was called, they insisted that the name of the dead officer should be called with the names of the living.” Thus Susanna Thompson was suggesting that the women of the Soldiers’ Aid Society should be viewed as soldiers who had died in service to their country.

This analogy of women’s relief work to military service was taken even further in the recounting of the Soldiers’ Aid Society’s fund raising activities at the 1863 Cheshire County Agricultural Society Fair. During the annual event the women of the society set up a booth “ornamented with flags and evergreens” at which they sold food and refreshments to the public. In the days following the fair, a woman of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society wrote an account, subsequently published in the New Hampshire Sentinel, which reads like an after-action battle report. “ATTENTION!,” the piece boldly began, “For once since the war broke out the ladies of Keene have been outnumbered.” Amidst the throngs of people at the fair, “Our picket guard were alert, our forces brave, and fought gloriously while the ammunition held out, and stood their ground till the last gun was fired.” At one point, when the women ran out of food, “The tables were cleared, scouts were sent to the village and brought in new forces in the shape of pies, cake, and roast chickens. Coffee and tea flowed refreshing from liberal fountains.” The woman reported that “the best stoves in the county did duty. They were the iron mortars for land service. Steam was kept up, coffee and tea made, beef roasted, and bread baked in such splendid loves that the bakers must have been jealous.”

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130 NHS, 6/18/63.
131 NHS, 10/1/63.
The Keene woman described their efforts at the fair as “victorious” and that if offered a similar opportunity they would “try again.” “We will never ‘say die.’ We will trumpet what we are to do in aid of our suffering soldiers from house to house, and I am confident every woman in Keene will come forward and provide liberally, as they have done time and again.” While reminding readers that the president of the Soldiers’ Aid Society had been absent during the event, the writer briefly drifts into political comparison before returning to, and concluding with, her military analogy. “[The readers] will please remember that our President – not Old Abe – was called away at the beginning of the action; but all will acknowledge that she left an efficient Cabinet, and they did valiantly, and retired with flying colors.”

While passages like the above account of the County Fair fundraiser may be interpreted as a mere whimsical play on words, they may, in fact, reflect a deeper meaning. As Nina Silber explains, “As the most readily available alternative to soldiering, aid work was endowed by many women with a patriotic force akin to men’s military efforts.” And in a time “when a premium was placed on ‘doing,’ aid work was one of the few pastimes that could actively engage women’s energies for the war.” And, as the account of the fair demonstrates, these women viewed their actions as a military service to the nation.

The impulse for action, or “doing” as Nina Silber states, was evident from the start of the conflict. In May 1861, while the town was in the midst of mobilizing for war, eighteen-year-old Hattie Johnson exclaimed, “You cannot [understand] the relief it was for us [women] to meet together and strip up bandages.” And on another occasion, when an unidentified Keene woman heard her soldier friend Charles Wilcox was sick in a Washington D.C. hospital, she

132 ibid.
133 Silber, Daughters of the Union, 170.
134 Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 5/17/61, Elliot Papers.
immediately wrote to him in words that reflect a deep yearning to do something to help. “You do have my sympathy and should have the best services of my hands if so many miles did not separate us.” She confided, “I know nothing of hospital life but I do know that sickness away from home is lonely enough. My comfortable room in a June day shade by the heavy foliage of the horse chestnut furnished more agreeable surroundings than your shelter tent on a winter’s day.” She pleaded, “What can we, for whom you have given up home comforts, do for you? I write to assure you of my thoughts and desire to add some comfort to your present life. Is there not some luxury you want which I can send you? Tell me freely as you would a sister if I can in any way make any return for all you are doing for me.”

This compulsion to act among Keene women was often fulfilled by participating in relief efforts. And although Northern women had a long history of coming together for various local causes, such as promoting temperance and fighting poverty, their wartime endeavors provided a vehicle with which to demonstrate their own loyalty to the nation, much like men did by joining the army. As Nina Silber explains, activity in the local Soldiers’ Aid Society in particular “drew women into the work of preserving the nation and directly called on them to serve their government.” And by doing so, these efforts placed “Northern women squarely into the war and many of its critical issues.”

Like their male counterparts Keene women could also draw on the community’s Revolutionary War legacy as a way to imbue their service with patriotic purpose. For example, during an October 1861 meeting of the Soldiers’ Aid Society “the attention of the ladies present was called to a pair of socks knit by an aged lady…whose father [had] served in the

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135 Unidentified Keene woman to Charles Wilcox, Wilcox Papers.
136 Silber, Daughters of the Union, 164.
Revolutionary War.” On the instep of each sock the woman had embroidered an American flag under which read “The Union forever.” That same meeting included a series of short addresses after which “the audience united in singing ‘America.’” The lyrics to this song, written in 1832 and first used at an Independence Day celebration in Boston that same year, made direct connection between the nation’s past and present, particularly the phrase

Land where my Fathers died
Land of the Pilgrim’s pride
From every mountain side
Let freedom ring

The sacred notion of “Union,” the primary motivating drive behind the Northern war effort, also included women as an integral part, one in which they too had a duty to serve. While lauding the efforts of fellow female aid workers in 1861, Soldiers’ Aid Society secretary Susanna Thompson wrote that these women, through their service, were “evincing a praiseworthy zeal in the glorious cause, showing that you are true daughters of the Union.” On another occasion Susanna Thompson asked rhetorically that while the war continued “are we not, everyone, bound to do our utmost for our country?” And in an April 1864 letter Keene resident Katherine Wheeler explained to a friend, “Our Keene Society has held meetings every week, and the ladies have worked steadily, though the meetings are smaller than they were in the beginning, as was to be expected, only those enlisted for the war will continue ready and eager for the work.” Here again we see analogy to military service as women are “enlisted for the war.” Two months later Katherine Wheeler claimed publicly in the local papers, “We women, especially, ought to be thankful that while so few of us are allowed the privilege of personally ministering to the sick

137 Records of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society, 1861-1862.
138 Susanna Thompson to Mrs. H.C. Piper, 10/31/61, in Records of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society.
139 Records of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society 1861-1862.
and wounded, we can, with the help of our insignificant tool, the needle, furnish aid and comfort that shall be sent wherever it is needed.”

The women’s wartime relief efforts at the 1863 Annual Cheshire County Fair represent another way in which local traditions could be adapted to serve the nation. The proposal for the fundraiser was first presented at a summer meeting of the Soldiers’ Aid Society in 1863. Some of the women put forth the idea that “a table should be spread with viands to sell in aid of the soldiers, and the young ladies were to be in attendance at the tables, our intention being to supply a portion of the army of agriculturists.” However, the women confessed almost sheepishly that they “did not wish to monopolize or take away from the booths usually erected on such occasions,” perhaps revealing a bit of uncertainty of whether the two causes were compatible. This hesitation was very similar to the uncertainty felt prior to the Annual Music Convention the previous year.

Despite this initial hesitance, the venture proved to be an unequivocal success in several ways. First, it was profitable, netting over $300 for the soldiers in just a single day. Second, it was considered by the public as both notable and worthy. Keene resident James Kittredge wrote to his friend in October 1863, “One of the principal features of Keene amusements since your [departure] was the ‘County Fair.’ The young ladies had a table entirely by themselves from which they sold many tempting articles for the benefit of the soldiers.” The women were also publicly lauded by the men of the New Hampshire Sentinel who wrote, “The ladies of Keene did a good thing. The table which they had prepared for the benefit of the sick and wounded soldiers

140 NHS, 6/23/64.
141 NHS, 10/1/63.
142 “Kittredge” to James Elliot, 10/8/63, Elliot Papers.
yielded more than $300 and might have yielded twice that amount, had not the resources been exhausted by the seven or eight thousands of persons who were here to devour them.”

And finally, the event left the female participants feeling proud of their accomplishment. Two days after the fair Margaret White was still glowing from the success of the fundraiser. “I have been peculiarly engaged in helping arrange a table of refreshments, on the fairgrounds, for the Soldiers; Aid Society,” she told her daughter-in-law Ruth in a letter. “Our enterprise for the soldiers was quite successful…a good deal of money to make out of pies and doughnuts.”

Margaret boasted that she “was on the grounds yesterday eight hours, working hard all the time, without time to eat anything but a biscuit, and did not get overtired. This will show you how well I am. I am grateful, I can assure you, for so much health and strength.” Another society member wrote that during the event “we had our ladies in waiting and maids of honor, for is it not the highest honor to wait and tend in aid of brave men?” Hattie Johnson, too, was greatly affected by the results of the fair. She wrote to a friend in early October, “You may have read an account of the Ladies’ table at the Fair in the ‘Sentinel’ I suppose.” She proudly informed him, “I learned to cut ham for sandwiches in most elegant style! I cut up a whole ham for that purpose, and then the bone was sold to five or six persons, as we fell short of provisions, until it was picked as clean as if boiled!” The nineteen-year-old confessed that, “I was pretty tired after it you may be sure, but it was worth all that to find but how good natured the world in general must be, for although we had to turn off scores of people for want of food and gave a scanty dinner to a great many others, there was very little complaint and no trouble whatever.” The sometimes cynical young woman was clearly moved by the success of the day’s efforts. “If I had ever any

143 NHS, 10/1/63.
144 White, William Orne White, 162.
145 NHS, 10/1/63.
faith in [the public’s] ‘total depravity’ I think that day’s experience would have destroyed it!” she exclaimed. “There were so many pleasant things happening all the time. I always felt it a duty to go to the ‘Fair’ and always before had a very stupid time there,” however, “this time it was too busy to be anything but pleasant. I stood at the counter from 9 o’clock am until 3 PM, you may imagine I was busy!"\textsuperscript{146}

The success of the fundraiser demonstrated the effectiveness of this particular tactic, and the following year the women of the Soldier’s Aid Society again decided to erect a table at the annual fair. As the 1864 event approached, the women received the hearty support of the men of the \textit{Sentinel} newspaper, who announced, “Tables are to be spread for the delicacies and luxuries of the season, and the ladies, who are generally the ardent friends of the soldiers, will deal them to the crowd, appropriating the proceeds to the benefit of the sick and wounded in the army,” adding, “God bless them and their laudable undertaking!”\textsuperscript{147}

Once again the event proved successful, netting almost $300 for soldiers’ relief. After the 1864 County Fair a woman of the Soldiers’ Aid Society wrote, “The Ladies of Keene, who undertook and executed a plan for raising money for the benefit of our sick and wounded

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\textsuperscript{146} Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 10/4/63; The following are some examples of Hattie Johnson’s streak of cynicism, which may help underscore the importance of her glowing appraisal of the County Fair fundraiser: “I have been [to the theater] two or three times, when I saw Rob-Roy, which was not particularly well performed...”, Hattie Johnson to James, 4/7/61. ; “I have also to go [on] another agreeable errand, that of collecting for the Bible Society, a duty which I will thank anyone to relieve me of but as no one seems to like it much better than I do, I fear I shall have to go round myself.” Hattie to James, May 4, 1862; Hattie to James Elliot, September 13, 1863

“You wish to hear of the ‘fun’ we had Institute Week! I don’t know how much you ‘might have had’ or made, but for my own part, and I think most of the others will agree with me, it was the most stupid...Convention we have had since I lived in Keene. There were few good singers and very few nice looking people. As someone said, ‘It was the most scrubby looking set we have had for a long time.’ There were one or two very beautiful young ladies present, over whose beauty you would have raved had you been here, [but] not being a ‘susceptible young man’ I admired in silence. But they were only the exceptions, as a rule there were few even ‘pretty’ or intelligent faces.” Hattie to James Elliot, 9/13/63.

\textsuperscript{147} NHS, 9/8/64.
soldiers by selling refreshments upon the grounds during our Annual Fair, desire to express their warmest thanks to the people, for co-operating with them so cheerfully and generously.” She explained, “The weather was as fine as if it had been made on purpose, the multitude greater than ever before, with appetite bent on serving their country, and best of all the supplies were so bounteous that the sales amounted to $276. So sure it is that ‘many a mickle make’s a muckle’.” The piece was signed simply, “One of Them.”

When, in October 1864, the county’s Ashuelot Valley Agricultural Society held the first annual Ashuelot Valley Fair the women opted to take part in this event as well. It was reported that upon one table at the fair the “ladies’ work was liberally and tastefully displayed, including some very fine specimens of handiwork.” And, likely encouraged by their success at the past two Cheshire County Fairs, the women of the Soldiers’ Aid Society manned a booth and sold food to the crowd to raise funds. The women raised $105.00 at the event.

Women and Politics

While works of benevolence had long been established as traditionally within women’s sphere, wartime benevolence, did not just serve a military purpose. By its very nature, relief work brought with it a sense of political purpose as well. But the Civil War was not the first time women of Keene acted on their political conscience. As one local historian notes, as early as 1823 the women of the Ladies’ Charitable Society of Keene “decided to use the funds on hand ‘to aid the Greeks’ in their war of independence (a popular cause at the time in the United States, where may citizens felt a kinship with the democratic ideas of ancient Athens.)”

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148 NHS, 9/29/64.
149 NHS, 10/20/64.
Nancy Cott explains that “women’s reliance on each other to confirm their values embodied a new kind of group consciousness, one which could develop into a political consciousness.”\textsuperscript{151} And with the outbreak of the Civil War the women of Keene again expressed an acute sense of political awareness and purpose.

In June 1861, while announcing the formation of the Cheshire County Soldiers Aid Society, the women incorporated the words of U.S. Senator Daniel Webster’s 1830 speech to Congress that emphasized the strength of a federal union. The women claimed that a concerted effort by the people to support the war effort “may yet swell the grand music of – Liberty and Union, now and forever, ONE and inseparable.”\textsuperscript{152} By phrasing the purpose of their efforts in this way, the women boldly declared their work –from the onset- as undergirded by political, as well as benevolent, intent.

In July 1863, a 24-year-old British journalist named Henry Yates Thompson visited Keene as guests of Rev. William and Mrs. Margaret White of the town’s Unitarian Church. During his stay he was invited to take part in a picnic outing to nearby Mount Monadnock, and his account of the day provides an interesting portrait of some of Keene’s women. The day’s party was comprised of thirty people, “mainly young ladies” who were dressed “in a sort of sensible costume – no crinoline and dresses down to their ankles.” The young Englishman was very impressed with his female companions. “The young ladies are very ‘bright’” and “very independent.” He gushed that the women were “well up” on the writings of Alfred Tennyson and Anthony Trollope. “They are a wonderful average of girls who can talk to you about novels, poetry and politics.” The women told him that “they have been working two days a week for the

\textsuperscript{151} Cott, \textit{The Bonds of Womanhood}, 194.
\textsuperscript{152} NHS, 6/20/61.
past two years for the army.” During the wagon ride home that afternoon “we had no end of singing,” the most popular of songs was John Brown’s Body, which depicted the radical abolitionist as a martyr and the war effort as a crusade to end slavery.153

Thompson’s observation regarding the political astuteness of the women underscores the fact that, despite lacking the right to vote, many women possessed an active interest and awareness in politics. Privately, women often expressed their political concerns and views regarding the war, emphasizing a belief in the importance of the cause and the nation. For example, one Keene woman wrote to her soldier friend, “With the spring comes thought of marches, of battle, all that is [part] in war.” However, she felt a strong sense of purpose to the hardships stating that, “the righteousness of our cause alone makes it possible.”154 In January 1863 Hattie Johnson wrote to another young man serving in the army, admitting, “But I forget I am not writing to a collegian sitting peacefully among his books but to a brave young soldier fighting the battles of his country…But whatever happens we know that all will be well.” She explained, “To us it seems strange and hard that this war should be allowed and that so many of our dear ones lose life or limb, but thank God it is for Liberty against Slavery, and Liberty is sure to triumph at last.”155

Following Lincoln’s first election in November 1860, Keene native Hannah Abbie Chase wrote home to her sister Clara from Chicago, Illinois where she had relocated with her husband. “It is dull now [that the] Election is over. For Lincoln is surely President here as well as there,” she wrote. “I think Illinois has done bravely to gain so many Republicans in four years. Tell

154 Unidentified woman to Charles Wilcox, Wilcox Papers
155 Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 1/25/63, Elliot Papers.
Father the only guns I heard from that way was the good news that all gave good Republican
majorities.”\textsuperscript{156} And four years later she wrote a similar note to her mother in Keene. “They are
having great times downtown tonight. I should judge by the noise, firing cannon, music,
bonfires, and last but not least, the marching in honor of the grand victory for the Republicans.
Is it not good news?” She also reported to her mother, “Mr. Gray said he did not see but one
copperhead today and he looked awful mad.”\textsuperscript{157}

Upon hearing of her good friend’s enlistment in 1862 19-year-old Jennie Gray confessed,
“I hasten to answer [your letter]. Its contents gave me mingled pain and pleasure. I will not say
pleasure – that does not express it. But it inspired the feelings which the contemplation of a
good action always does.” She explained, “You and your friends [who have enlisted] have
reason to rejoice in the noble spirit of self-sacrifice which you have manifested. Although hearts
may be bowed with grief and eyes filled with tears we must all admire and reverence the heroism
which such deeds display on the part of those who give all to their country.” Writing to her son
James in early 1863, Harriet Elliot emphasized the political importance of his commitment.
“With the assurance that you are doing a known duty to your country, rejoice to think you are a
willing sacrifice which will end in glorious triumph of life and liberty.” She assured him, “I have
full confidence in the result and hope to see our country raised to the standard more worthy than
ever before. Shall you not be glad to feel that you helped to raise your own country to such a
glorious state…?”\textsuperscript{158}

Conversely, women could express their own disapproval of those men who refused to
show support for the war. Hattie Johnson makes her feelings perfectly clear when describing a

\textsuperscript{156} Hannah Chase to Sister Clara, Nov. 20, 1860, NHHS, Chase Papers.
\textsuperscript{157} Hannah Abbie Chase to Mother, Oct 12, 1864, NHHS, Chase Papers.
\textsuperscript{158} Harriet Elliot to James Elliot, 2/10/63, Elliot Papers.
February 1863 skating outing with friends at a local pond, “[We] buckled on our skates and away we went, having a delightful time,” she explained to her friend who was then in the army. “I am happy to inform you that there were only four masculines there and those were four too many. I wished they had all been with you or somewhere else, where they ought to be.” Hattie vented her frustration with these men who had yet to enlist. “I feel rather vexed sometimes with these stout healthy men who are still staying ‘round here with no excuse whatever, I feel a sort of contempt for them all as if I had no business to be civil to them.” She then asked, “Aren’t you glad you are in the proper place? I am afraid I shouldn’t have been civil to you if you’d stayed at home.”

As the cost of war rose and casualties mounted, the decision whether or not to sustain the war effort became more clearly defined as a political choice, whether or not to back the policies of the Republican-led government. Members of the rising anti-Lincoln faction, who came to be called “Copperheads,” objected to expanding federal powers and antislavery war measures. And, when these political divisions began appearing throughout Northern communities, it was not just men who urged support for the federal government; many women too expressed ardent feelings of political loyalty. As Nina Silber explains, during the Civil War many women “found themselves more deeply invested in local and national politics as the war dragged on and as partisan splits became more pronounced.”

In February 1863 Lucy Smith wrote to her cousin. “Do you feel distressed about the country?” she asked, “I do not.” Referring to the Copperhead politicians she admitted she was “vexed with the demagogues & wish we had but one foe to conquer” but her “confidence”

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159 Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 2/22/63, Elliot Papers.
160 Silber, Daughters of the Union, 132.
remained “unshaken.” She boldly declared that “there can be but one result & I hope to live to see our beloved country far more glorious & worthy of her high station than ever before.”

Han Duren also made reference to political loyalty in a letter to a female friend. “This dreadful war has made us all feel one another’s troubles,” she began. “All did I say?” she qualified, “I wish it were so but alas it is not so. But they (the Copperheads) are in the minority I am happy to say, those who do not sympathize with us who are truly Loyal.” (emphasis added) And after Republican victories in the state elections of 1864 Harriet Elliot boasted to her son, “Of course we are happy in the results of the Election, and hear of little that is said, while the Dems. are as still as mice when the cat is after them.”

While describing a rumored romantic connection between a local woman and man, Hattie Johnson cried, “I don’t think him half good enough for her and I hope she thinks so too and that it will not amount to anything serious. He is a very pleasant skating acquaintance, and in that way I have seen a good deal of him and feel that I know him pretty well. But for a life partner, oh dear…for her to marry him, a well-known secessionist and rebel sympathizer, I think it would be too bad…” So, in this instance a man’s political proclivities had marred Hattie’s opinion of his character.

Ultimately, the fact that Keene, New Hampshire was a staunchly Republican New England town may have much to do with facilitating women’s efforts to support the Lincoln Administration’s prosecution of the war. Two small newspaper items from the 1864 elections perhaps hint of a somewhat (and relatively) more inclusive political environment. That February, as both parties ramped up efforts to garner support for their candidates, Republicans

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161 Lucy Smith to Harriet Elliot 2/8/63, Elliot Papers.
162 Harriet Elliot to James Elliot, 3/11/64, Elliot Papers.
163 Hattie Johnson to James Elliot, 1/25/63, Elliot Papers.
announced a series of political rallies in Keene’s *New Hampshire Sentinel*. One such “Union Meeting,” to be held in a neighboring town, announced: “A general invitation is extended to all gentlemen and ladies, without regard to parties.” (emphasis added)\(^{164}\) And in November, a large number of the town’s Republicans gathered for a dinner at the Cheshire House Hotel to celebrate Abraham Lincoln’s reelection to a second term. It was noted that the 350 guests that evening also included “a goodly sprinkling of ladies in the assembly whose presence was not without its salutary influences on the rougher sex.” One attendee reported that a series of speeches, toasts, and musical offerings from the brass band contributed to a sense of jubilance in “which all seemed animated.”\(^{165}\)

### Allegiance

Throughout the war the women of Keene had acted locally to support the war effort. But from the onset they had always seen themselves as part of larger picture and thus acknowledged their allegiances between community and nation. As early as October 1861 Susanna Thompson, Secretary of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society, had informed a colleague in Dublin, New Hampshire, that “all garments made by this Society are sent to the New Hampshire Volunteers – all articles, the materials of which are purchased with the funds of this Society are also designed for the New Hampshire ‘boys.’ Therefore,” she continued, “two or three of our ladies a few days since started a foreign enterprise – or in other words collected quite a sum with which to buy yarn to knit socks for the Missouri Soldiers – showing that though they believe charity begins at home it does not in their opinion end there.”\(^{166}\) Also that month the Society reported that they had sent a large box of blankets, pillows, and other supplies to the United

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\(^{164}\) *NHS*, 2/25/64.

\(^{165}\) *NHS*, 11/24/64.

\(^{166}\) Susanna Thompson to Mrs. A.F. Fiske, 10/3/61., Records of the CCSAS.
States Sanitary Commission in Boston, Massachusetts. Thus, even in the early stages of the war, the women of Keene were making efforts to contribute beyond simple state-affiliated agencies, demonstrating a sense of balance to both local and national loyalty.

And as the war progressed the scale and magnitude of the demand brought the women of Keene into increasingly more contact with the United States Sanitary Commission. As members of a state-affiliated agency, the women of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society found themselves faced with the issue of deciding which channel to direct supplies: through the state soldiers’ aid society headquarters in Concord, New Hampshire, or through the U.S. Sanitary Commission headquarters in Boston. In January 1862, upon hearing that all of the New Hampshire regiments had been fully supplied, the women of the CCSAS were considering “turning our attention & labors, for the present to the Sanitary Commission.” Thus, they did not view their only objective as supplying New Hampshire soldiers, but wanted to continue efforts to meet the needs of whoever required it regardless of state origin.

This same sense of broadened allegiance is reflected in a letter written in March 1862 by Susanna Thompson, Secretary of the CCSAS, again to a fellow member in Dublin, New Hampshire. She writes, “I suggested that you send your box of hospital clothing to Mrs. Perley, [president of the New Hampshire Soldiers’ Aid Society in] Concord [New Hampshire] but added that we [women of Keene] were expecting before long to send a box to the Sanitary Commission and if you preferred sending to the Sanitary Commission we could send yours with ours.” She added, “Articles sent to the [U.S. Sanitary] Commission are not forwarded to Concord but direct to Boston.”167 Since there existed a balance between state and national loyalty, the priority here

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167 Susanna Thompson to Mrs. Fiske, March 14, 1862, Records of the CCSAS.
was efficiency, regardless of state affiliation. The US Sanitary Commission’s regional headquarters in Boston, which was both a rail hub and seaport, was the faster route to send supplies south where they would be distributed to whichever troops were in most need.

By December 1862 the women of the CCSAS had become so engaged with the Sanitary Commission that they began to consider an alternative organizational structure. Keene woman Mary Abbott, local representative for the USSC, had even gone so far as to call the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society’s state affiliation “an obstacle to any other associated action in the county” and urged streamlining with the Sanitary Commission. In response to this, as well as to similar proposals, Catherine Dinsmoor, president of the CCSAS, wrote to Mrs. N.G. Upham, the president of the New Hampshire State Soldiers’ Aid Society at Concord. She informed Mrs. Upham that she had recently learned of a “new and more systematic plan of operations which the [U.S. Sanitary] Commission proposes to adopt, and one which will turn all collateral branches into this one grand channel for the comfort and relief of the Soldiers.” Dinsmoor explained that over the past year the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society had “contributed a large proportion of its means to the Sanitary Commission [while] at the same time it has always felt pledged to work for New Hampshire Soldiers whenever there was a call…” She asked if the New Hampshire state aid society had any plans to alter their current structure, adding, “If by any new mode of operation a more efficient and united action could be attained, I, for one, should rejoice to see the County reorganized and to leave the field for abler hands.”

While the there was no formal change in the state organization, by 1863 the women of Keene had decided that the U.S. Sanitary Commission was indeed the most efficient way to

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168 Catherine Dinsmoor to Mrs. N.G. Upham, President State Soldiers’ Aid Society, Dec. 19, 1862. Records of the CCSAS.
supply the war effort. In April 1864 member Katherine Wheeler explained to a colleague, “Nearly all our articles have been sent, this past year, to the Sanitary Commission, believing that to be the most reliable and speedy means of communicating with our brave and suffering soldiers wherever they may be. All boxes are forwarded for us by Freight from Keene to Boston free of expense.” Here again we see a premium placed on efficiency to helping the nation rather than concern for state allegiance.

For much of the war the women had also devoted time and effort to supplying another national network, the U.S. Christian Commission, which raised the additional question of whether the Sanitary Commission should take precedence over the Christian Commission. The issue seems to have been settled relatively easily and methodically by the women of Keene. On July 15, 1864, at a board meeting of the Directors of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society “the question whether the Society should work for the Sanitary or Christian Commission was discussed.” After a vote it was decided “that the Society should not work exclusively for either; that it should work for both.” So, much like the balance between state and national allegiance, the women also felt an obligation to both of the major national benevolent organizations, again underscoring a broad sense of allegiance in supporting the war effort. And since the women of Keene were not merely seeing to the needs of “their boys,” (i.e. men from their community with whom they had personal ties), their work took on a more profound and national meaning. Their efforts were, in fact, military service, drawing on similar historical legacies, backed by political motivation, and viewed by the women themselves as fulfilling a duty to their country.

169 Katherine Wheeler to Mary Boynton April 26, 1864, Records of the CCSAS.
170 Records of Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society.
Commercial Nationalism

The nationalistic military culture embraced by women during the war also became manifest throughout the community’s business sector as well. By the mid-nineteenth century Keene had become a thriving commercial center. As both a railroad hub and county seat, the town was a nexus for outlying residents who came to town to conduct business and buy goods. Several significant industries, including a substantial wool mill, provided economic opportunity and stability, and Keene was rapidly growing.¹⁷¹ A visitor to Central Square at that time would have been met with a wide array of business establishments, including a hardware store, jeweler, three furniture stores, two dealers in dry goods and clothing, two bookstores, a publishing house, a grocer, three druggists, a dealer in stoves and tin ware, a gun shop, six shoe dealers, four blacksmiths, a tack shop, carriage maker, three photographers, a hat shop, and a bakery.¹⁷²

(Illustration 5-1)

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¹⁷¹ Some of the major industries at that time in Keene included a railroad machine shop, a brickyard, a municipal gas works, Cheshire Steam Mills, and Faulkner & Colony Textile Mill. Descriptions of the town’s industrial and economic growth can be found in Griffin, A History of Keene, 436–68, and KHC, Upper Ashuelot, 84-106.

¹⁷² KHC, Upper Ashuelot, 320-21; Griffin, History of Keene, 465-67.
Illustration 5-1. Richards Block on eastern side of Central Square 1864
(Keene Public Library)

When the conflict began Keene’s businesses were quick to capitalize on the “war fever” that had consumed the people of the town. “RED, WHITE, AND BLUE!” began the “new advertisements” column of the May 25, 1861, New Hampshire Sentinel. Downtown shop owner George Tilden announced he now had a variety of national ephemera for sale at his store including “Union Paper, Envelopes, Flags, and Badges” available at retail or wholesale.\textsuperscript{173} And

\textsuperscript{173} NHS, 5/23/61
in June 1861 Buffum’s Clothing Store offered men’s paper dickies “with the red, white, and blue” patriotic colors.  

The dry goods store of D.W. Buckminster & Co. used the national crisis to full advantage, employing an entire marketing campaign around this theme. Their first advertisement of the campaign virtually exploded onto the pages of the *Sentinel* in May 1861. “**Our Government Must be Protected!**” proclaimed the ad in large bold letters, echoing themes of recent public war rallies. The accompanying illustration depicted a large United States flag floating atop a flagpole. A stalwart artilleryman (dressed in Mexican War era attire) stands next to a cannon which belches smoke. The small print explains that “in order to be ready to take the field” the owners needed to sell out their large stock of dry goods, and “If you want to get a Bargain” come visit their store immediately. (Illustration 5-2)

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Illustration 5-2. This newspaper advertisement appeared in the May 16, 1861 edition of the *New Hampshire Sentinel*. The ad combines the national theme of war with promotion of a local business.

The spirit of urgency and action that had consumed the town was used to full effect in June by Buckminster. As in their earlier ad the national flag was used to attract the reader’s attention as well as to set the tone of the unique advertisement which read:
BY TELEGRAPH

The very Latest News from the Seat of War

Washington, June 13th – Gen. Scott has concluded
Not to march on Harpers Ferry until

D.W. Buckminster & Co.

have had time to close out their large stock of

Dry Goods!

Therefore they are going to LET THEM SLIDE

For Less than Cost!

Later – We have just heard from Fort Monroe.

Gen. Butler wishes

D.W. Buckminster & Co.

To sell out their

CLOTHING,

At whatever sacrifice; therefore they are expected

To do it.

Still Later. – A report from Baltimore states

That Gen. Banks is feeling very well satisfied and

Hopeful of that city, in consequence of the good

news just received from Keene, viz: that

D.W. Buckminster & Co.

Have just received a large lot of the

Imperial Hoop Skirts

And are selling them and all other kinds of Goods

At prices to suit the times

The wording of the advertisements reflected the urgency of mobilizing for the war. The military officers were “ordering” the companies of Keene to sell their goods. And following the military
chain of command, the people of the town were required to purchase these items in order to fulfill their duty.

The ad went on to claim that Buckminster & Co. were attempting to sell their entire stock in order to “take the field.” By late June, however, the company explained that the situation had changed. Beneath a picture of a large American eagle the company announced “to the public in general and to the Ladies in particular” that they would not be closing their doors. Why the change? They claimed it was to support the war effort. “Help Gen. Scott put down the Rebellion,” they boldly exclaimed, for it would be “a sad state of things to have every store in town closed.” The ad closed with the ardent assertion, “We do it for the public good, and hope it will be appreciated,” implying that the firm was doing its utmost to fulfill its patriotic duty.\footnote{\textit{NHS}, 8/29/61.} (Illustration 5-3)
Illustration 5-3. Newspaper advertisement for D.W. Buckminster’s dry goods store in Keene

This military structure theme was used by Keene merchant David Hutchins. “The War! 250,000 Troops in the Field!” urgently called the attention of the readers of the Cheshire Republican advertisement. “David’s host of Patriots have volunteered to purchase goods. They will please volunteer to Pay Up!” Echoing the pleas for volunteers to enlist in the army, Hutchins was looking for “volunteers” to purchase his goods, as if they were doing similar duty. The ad continues with the use of the day’s terminology when the businessman claims, “I do not believe in recruiting my pocket by the services of an officer unless there is rebellion in the Camp! I must have Cash to purchase goods with. My accounts must be paid. I cannot secede
from the above determination.” And finally he again stresses the military comparison by calling himself “David Hutchins, Commander-in Chief of the Boot & Shoe Trade.”

Many advertisements made use of both national symbols and wartime phrases to attract the reader’s attention. An ad for “Family Dye Colors” featured “Lady Liberty” holding a shield decorated with a national emblem. An American flag is draped across her lap and banner floating above her reads “Perfect Fast Colors.” Thus the quality of the dye was linked to the steadfast colors of the nation in this time of war. (Illustration 5-4)

Illustration 5-4. Newspaper ad for Family Dye Colors

Tilden’s Bookstore proudly promoted its “Stationary at War Prices!” And in January 1862, Mr. George Richards announced the startling news through the local papers that

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176 CR, 7/1/61.
177 NHS, 2/13/62.
there was currently a “Rebel messenger in Keene.” The “messenger” was a Confederate artillery shell that had been sent home by members of the 2nd New Hampshire. The war trophy was currently on public display and could be seen by anyone visiting Mr. Richards’ jewelry store on Central Square. Here we see how even a local jewelry retail shop became connected with the military, a concept unheard of and even nonsensical in prewar Keene. But now, Tilden’s display provided yet another connection to the national conflict, allowing the people of Keene to view a tangible and genuine relic of combat right here on the main street of their far-removed New Hampshire community.

Keene merchants seemed quick to capitalize on the public’s yearning for news of the war. In May 1862, as the Union Army of the Potomac clashed with the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia in and around Fredericksburg, Virginia in a major battle, readers of the May 8, 1862, issue of the *New Hampshire Sentinel* were met with the headline “Victory! Complete Success…” However, the exclamation was followed by, “…of the New Dry Goods Store of E.R. Locke in Keene’s Central Square.” The company proudly touted their “5000 dollars in new goods!” Two months later, in July of 1862, the new Keene firm of W. G. Wilson also utilized the eye-catching technique of cleverly placed headlines. “Three Rousing Cheers for the Union!” leapt from the newspaper page in large bold letters. But beneath each word of this seemingly patriotic sentiment, fine print relayed a wholly different message:

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178 *NHS*, 1/23/62.
THREE

days since, W.G. Wilson received at his New Store, No.3
Cheshire House Block, Main St, a large and splendid assort-
ment of every style of goods he has had. He has now on hand a

ROUSING

stock of Boots and Shoes for Ladies’, Gentlemen’s, and
Children’s wear, and when he tells his customers the exceeding
low rates at which he is selling these Goods the news

CHEERS

up their spirits. This is a larger and Better Stock of Boots
and Shoes that can be found this side of the city, and no mis-
take. He buys his goods

FOR

cash, and hence he is enabled to undersell many of his neigh-
bors. He would be happy to have all his old friends and cust-

omers drop in and examine

THE

quality and prices of this new and select assortment. He has
the best selected assortment of the above named goods to be
found in the State, if not in the

UNION!

Don’t fail to call at the new store before purchasing your sum-
mer supplies. Satisfaction warranted.

Regardless of motivation, these advertisements represent clearly how civilian life was becoming
infiltrated by elements of nationalistic military culture. Now, everyday activities such as
shopping for household goods became redefined, imbued with a military and even patriotic
purpose. And in a Northern community far removed from the fighting, these ads were yet another reminder of the ongoing national conflict.

The war also provided new ways to market specific products. The April 7, 1864, issue of the *Sentinel* promoted White’s Army Stimulant, which promised “to cure Diphtheria, Sore Throat, Coughs, and Colds, or the money refunded.” The ad claimed that “It has been used in the Army with perfect satisfaction since the commencement of the war. The soldier has found it an indispensable article when exposed to the sudden changes of the weather.” It was available through several local agents throughout Cheshire County, including Obed Dort of Keene.\(^{180}\)

In another advertisement readers were told that “the sudden changes of our climate are sources of Pulmonary, Bronchial and Asthmatic Affections.” In order to “avoid these various ailments take ‘Brown’s Bronchial Troches or Lozenges.’” The ad offers the suggestion that “soldiers should have them, as they can be carried in the pocket and taken as occasion requires.”\(^{181}\) Two months later the same company explained through advertisement that “Few are aware of the importance of checking a cough or a ‘slight cold’ in its first stage; that which in the beginning would yield to a mild remedy, if neglected soon attacks the lungs.” And again the company suggested that “Military Officers and Soldiers should have them, as they can be carried and taken as occasion requires.”\(^{182}\) Capitalizing on the concern for the local men who were then serving in the army, the ad urged people to purchase these items and send them to the soldiers, a clever marketing approach but one that also connected ordinary consumer items, in this case throat lozenges, with the military.

\(^{180}\) NHS, 4/7/64
\(^{181}\) NHS, 4/28/64.
\(^{182}\) NHS, 6/23/64.
The ultimate Union victory in 1865 prompted an advertising campaign by fireworks dealer Cutter & Austin of Boston. In the weeks leading up to Independence Day 1865, the Boston firm took full advantage of the celebratory atmosphere to promote their product. Each week during this time the people of Keene found a recurring bold ad in the local paper. “FIREWORKS! Celebrate!! Celebrate!! July Fourth! Our Arms Victorious! The Rebellion Quelled!”

Newspapers also began including war-related humor in their copy. One example is the following blurb published in an October 1862 New Hampshire Sentinel. “According to the latest census of 1860 the excess of males over females in this country was seven hundred and thirty three thousand two hundred and fifty-eight. So, dear ladies, you may take heart. Even after this destructive war, there will no doubt be a man apiece for you.” And on another occasion the same paper included, “A woman presented herself at the central police station, Chicago, the other day and complained that, though she had two husbands in the army she could get no relief from either the county or the city war committee.” And yet another example read: “A man was married at Newburyport without being required to place the ring on the bride’s finger – he had no arms, they having been blown off by the premature explosion of a cannon while serving in the navy.” The Cheshire Republican also included wartime humor. “The members of the 3d Connecticut regiment at the seat of war evidently intend to make the most of their camp fare. They have sent to New Haven a tough whip lash, braided from a piece of beef served out to them for rations.” And finally, “An elderly lady who attended a meeting of the 1st Vermont regiment

183 NHS, 5/11/65.  
184 NHS, 10/4/62.  
185 NHS, 5/26/64.  
186 NHS, 4/7/64.
arose, full of enthusiasm and said she thanked God that she was able to do something for her country.” She explained that her two sons, “all she possessed in the world,” were serving in this regiment “and the only thing she had to regret was that she could not have known it twenty years ago—she would have furnished more of them.” These passages may have provided a respite of levity, helping the public cope with the unprecedented tragedy of these dark times. The passages also had a national, as opposed to a local, theme and may in fact have been syndicated. Thus, while appearing in local press, they provided another sinew to the national body at large.

Along with providing copious newspaper fodder, publishing houses also took advantage of the war for economic gain, and these years saw an outpouring of military-themed published material for sale, available to Keene residents via mail, local agents, or town book stores. Examples include new titles such as General Butler in New Orleans and The Nurse and the Spy, the latter authored by female author and rising national celebrity Sarah Edmonds. The Secret Service – The Field – The Dungeon and the Escape promised “stirring events” recounted by a Civil War soldier, and was available through a publishing agent travelling through Keene. Late 1863 saw the announcement that General George McClellan’s official report of his service in the Union army had been sent to Congress and would be published shortly. And in October 1864, even before the war was decided, a New York publishing house was offering a new book titled The Rebellion Record that boasted the “most complete record, official and unofficial, of the events connected with the rebellion.” The publisher suggested that the book “should be in the hands of all who are able to procure it.”

188 NHS, 5/25/65. 
189 NHS, 12/31/63. 
190 NHS, 5/18/65.
Just five weeks after Abraham Lincoln’s assassination, the people of Keene saw the first ads for their slain president’s biography. Henry Raymond, editor of the New York Times had compiled a book entitled *The Life and State Papers of Abraham Lincoln: Late President of the United States...To which is Added a History of the Tragical and Mournful Scenes Connected with the Close of his Noble and Eventful Life.*” And in the same advertisement the writer announced that a second work, *The Life and Public Services of Andrew Johnson*, was currently “In Preparation” and would be ready for purchase the next month.\(^\text{191}\) Another important factor is that these publishing houses distributed these books over wide regions and many different states. So this shared print form helped strengthen ties between the people of Keene and fellow Americans reading the same books, reinforcing the sense “imagined community” similar to newspapers.\(^\text{192}\)

During the war the citizens of Keene were also presented with plentiful opportunity to purchase music of national and military themed subject matter. G.P. Putnam offered a book of musical verses titled *Lyrics of Loyalty*, edited and arranged by Frank Moore and first published in 1861. During the war this work was expanded to three series, which included “the Songs of the Soldiers, and Ballads of the Rebellion” as well as “the Personal and Political epics and rhymes, which have been produced on the Rebel as well as the National side of the contest.” Moore’s Preface to the 1864 printing explains that the “purpose of this collection is to preserve some of the best specimens of Lyrical Writings which the present Rebellion has called forth.” As late as 1864 this book was still being advertised to Keene residents in the *Sentinel*.\(^\text{193}\)

\(^{191}\) Ibid.  
\(^{192}\) Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.  
\(^{193}\) Frank Moore, *Lyrics of Loyalty* (NY: G.P. Putnam, 1864), Preface; *NHS*, 2/18/64.
In 1864 a newspaper advertisement announced, “We have just received from the publisher, Horace Waters, of [New York City] four new pieces of music” including “Our Flag, Our Army, and Our President” and “Atlanta Ours and Fairly Won.”194 And just fourteen days after Lincoln’s burial in Springfield, Illinois, the people of Keene could buy the sheet music of the late president’s funeral march. “New Music,” announced the newspaper, “to the memory of Abraham Lincoln, the Martyr President of the United States.”195

This commercialization of nationalism extended beyond the purchase of tangible goods; popular entertainments also capitalized on the wartime national sentiments, often combining traditional entertainments with a celebration of national heritage and history. In May 1863 Keene residents could attend a Saturday matinee and evening performance at the Town Hall, which featured “The celebrated Barker Family” singers “along with ‘Barret’s Panorama of the American Revolution’” – Giving all the Principle Lead Battles during our long war with England, from 1775 to 1781 in connection…with Jones’ Panorama of the Present War.”196 Also that summer the women of the Soldiers’ Aid Society organized an exhibit of “Banvard’s Painting of the Holy Land, with the Historical Tableaux of the War on the Mississippi.”197 While these two exhibits may seem an odd pairing to the modern reader, to nineteenth century Americans they would have had profound meaning. As art historian John Davis points out,

The special relationship with the lands of the Bible that Americans constructed for themselves was premised on a single metaphor, remarkably potent and synoptic, which explained the United States as a new Israel, a New World promised land reserved for members of a favored nation. The land that had given birth to the Book and the land that was its fulfillment merged in an associational equation of biblical incident and national inspiration. The actual landscape of Palestine and

194 NHS, 10/12/64.
195 NHS, 5/18/65.
196 NHS, 5/7/63.
197 Letter of M.C. White to Mr. Henry R. Brown, July 13, 1863. Records of the CCSAS.

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Syria was invoked as a validation, not only of the authenticity of the Bible, but also of the notion of America as heir to the sacred topography.”

The artist John Banvard was nationally renowned, first for his paintings of the Mississippi River and later for his depictions of the Holy Lands. Thus, this exhibition of the work of a prominent American artist displayed locally in Keene’s Town Hall, reflected public interest in the current war while invoking the notion of the United States as a new Holy Land.

In September 1863 the residents of Keene were presented with a unique proposition that blended entertainment with benevolent fundraising. It was announced through the New Hampshire Sentinel that a national campaign was underway to establish an institution for “invalid and disabled soldiers.” Tickets could be purchased for one dollar that would admit the bearer to a travelling exhibit known as “The Great Mirror of the Rebellion.” The exhibit was a series of paintings “on which the best artists in the country have been employed for the last three months,” combined with “startling Dioramic accompaniments [of] the most thrilling incidents and Battles of the War, both Naval and on land.” Half of the funds raised through sales of tickets would be donated to the proposed national soldiers’ asylum. The promoter of the exhibit claimed, “By combining this enterprise with the public place of amusement of such well known high character and merit, the subscriber to the fund, while giving his money for the promotion of great a charitable design, may receive a full equivalent for the gaiety in witnessing this splendid series of paintings.”

The “Great Mirror” exhibit not only promoted and celebrated American artists, but also brought the public into contact with military culture. Much like the U.S. Sanitary

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199 Ibid., 66.
200 NHS, 9/10/63.
Commission and the U.S. Christian Commission, the fundraiser allowed the citizens of Keene to act locally but contribute to a national cause, as half of the proceeds were to be given to the welfare of soldiers from across the country who had sacrificed to preserve the Union.

This incorporation of military culture into popular culture could also be seen in traveling shows. In late 1863 a “novel exhibition” of “liliputians,” including celebrity midgets Commander Charles Foote and Colonel Small, appeared at Keene’s Town Hall accompanied by a traveling opera troupe.\textsuperscript{201} Another popular and well-established entertainment in nineteenth century America was the travelling circus, which also facilitated shared experience among Americans living in disparate places.\textsuperscript{202} Keene, New Hampshire saw its first circus come to town in 1826 and the town quickly became a regular stop for various circus companies.\textsuperscript{203} But when “The New York Champs Elysees Circus” visited Keene in June 1865, it included a new addition to its program, one that reflected the public’s newfound curiosity with all things military. Featured among several traditional attractions was “a perfect model of the world famed Monitor, the ‘Monarch of the Seas’.”\textsuperscript{204}

The Civil War brought about a noticeable change to Keene’s business and commercial world. All of the items discussed above: advertising, products, printed material, and entertainments, represent, in one form or another, a commodification of nationalism. As members of a traditional consumer culture, Americans could now purchase items that celebrated a sense of nation or connected them with fellow Americans through shared experience. By doing so people could demonstrate their own sense of loyalty and belonging. Today, Americans have

\textsuperscript{201} NHS, 11/26/63.
\textsuperscript{203} Griffin, \textit{History of Keene}, 498.
\textsuperscript{204} NHS, 6/1/65.
become accustomed to the intertwining of nationalism with consumerism, evident in such events as Presidents’ Day Sales and Fourth of July indulgences. It seems this connection between nationalism and consumerism was present in the wartime experiences of Keene residents during the Civil War as well.\footnote{The concept of “economic nationalism” is explored by Dana Frank in her book \textit{Buy American: The Untold Story of Economic Nationalism}. She explains that Americans have a long history of showing support for the nation through spending habits. Beginning with the boycott against British goods before the Revolution, Americans have demonstrated a belief that purchasing American-made products would directly contribute to the strength of the nation, particularly against foreign powers. The commercial nationalism seen in Keene may have been partly attributed to this tradition.}

But with this shared wartime commercial experience came new challenges and even perils. In early 1863 Hattie Johnson attended a performance of the Keene Dramatic Club at the Town Hall, the proceeds of which, it was advertised, “will be devoted to the benefit of our soldiers.” The event included two plays, “Robert Macaire” and “Off to the War.” “I went to one just for the fun of the thing,” Hattie explained. She was less than impressed by the performance. “They undertook a Tragedy in which Charles Starkweather was the hero. I never laughed much more at a Comedy. C.S. himself acted very well and one or two others of the menkind – but the women were all ‘sticks,’ however it was pretty good fun.”\footnote{Harriet Johnson to James Elliot, 2/22/63, Elliot Papers.}

After the play the inquisitive young woman spoke with some of the actors. She continues,

\begin{quote}
The best of it, however, was that the money was to be ‘given to the Soldiers’ or for their benefit. I asked someone how much the Soldiers obtained from them, ‘Well,’ said she, ‘each of the actors agreed to take two dollars or $2 \frac{1}{2} for themselves (there were about a dozen of them!) and then after paying the expenses of the hall three nights there was not much left for the ‘benefit of the Soldiers’ – Wasn’t that a dodge!\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{quote}
As we have seen, earlier commercial establishments in Keene were quick to capitalize on the wartime sentiment for financial gain. However, these local advertisements and marketing, regardless of the sense of urgency conveyed in some, were transparent, and consumers could make their own decisions on whether to spend their money on products. In contrast, Hattie Johnson’s revealing account illustrates that there may have been unscrupulous exploitation of nationalism for personal profit in Keene during this tumultuous period.

With a population of roughly 4000 in 1860, Keene still retained a sense of familiarity among its residents but was rapidly growing, and would soon reach a point where not everyone knew, or knew of, their fellow community members. One of the most sweeping and profound changes to American society during its tremendous early growth was the loss of personal connections amid a growing anonymity. This anonymity was an inevitable consequence of a rapidly expanding nation, facilitated by the rise or urbanization by the mid-nineteenth century. Thus, during the Civil War the process of forming bonds with the “imagined community” of fellow countrymen in support of the war required Americans to exercise a certain degree of blind faith. The war, in a sense, accelerated this sense of trust, as people looked to fellow Northerners for unity in support of the war. It was this atmosphere of ambiguity that could expose smaller tight-knit communities such as Keene to threats of exploitation in the guise of support for the war effort. For example, it seems that in early 1863, someone was fraudulently posing as a

209 The term created by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Community*.
representative of the Soldiers’ Aid Society in order to solicit money, prompting Society president Catherine Dinsmoor to take out the following ad in the local papers: “CAUTION. – No person has been authorized to collect funds for the Soldiers’ Aid Society.”

To meet the overwhelming needs of the war, the federal government contracted private citizens and businesses for supplies. And, due to the willingness of the public to aid the war effort, this relationship between the government and the people could be exploited. In 1864 a gentleman posing as a government agent for purchasing horses was able to make several acquaintances in Keene and after a few days in this guise, managed to persuade the teller at the local Cheshire County Bank to hand over $280.00. He then quietly left town leaving an unpaid livery bill. The introduction of national currency during the war opened new opportunities for corruption too. The year 1864 witnessed a rash of counterfeit schemes across New Hampshire, which citizens of Keene read about in their local papers. One such article read, “We learn that several persons were arrested in the central part of our state charged with having in possession and passing counterfeit bills and U.S. fractional currency – a Mrs. Roberts at Nashua and her husband at Fisherville; also a Mr., Hartwell Bonney at Hooksett. They have been examined and bound over for trial.” The same article also mentions four others arrested for “having upon them counterfeit United States currency.”

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210 NHS, 1/22/63.
211 NHS, 10/6/64.
212 NHS, 7/14/64.
Chapter Conclusion

The Civil War brought the American public increasingly more connected with the military, more so than at any other time in its short history. The armed forces had become the primary means with which to preserve the Union, and as the Northern populace became emotionally and logistically connected to the army, a distinctive military culture soon emerged. This military culture crossed gender lines, and the women of Keene, while acting through traditional networks, were strongly influenced by a growing sense of militaristic nationalism. Keene’s businesses and commercial enterprises also capitalized on this spirit of wartime nationalism. Through marketing and sale of “patriotic” products, this commercialization of nationalism demonstrated yet another way existing local institutions could connect the people of this community with the nation at large.
Chapter 6
Nationalism Tested & the Union Preserved

The year 1864 was a pivotal and trying time for many Northerners. After three years of conflict, a new vision of the Union had emerged. This evolving nationalism, forged to meet the crisis, put increasingly more trust in the expanded powers of the federal government to prosecute the war. And for the past year, emancipation had required Northerners to alter their view of a postwar citizenry, one which now included millions of newly-freed African Americans.

Yet, as the Civil War entered its fourth year, many people on the Northern home front continued to bear the strain of the grueling conflict. Mounting casualties, resistance to the draft, and doubts about expanding federal policies all threatened to derail the Lincoln Administration’s war effort in this, a presidential election year. A growing faction of Peace Democrats throughout the Northern states advocated a negotiated settlement of the rebellion that would effectively reverse many of the changes enacted by the federal government. The presidential election of 1864 would serve as a referendum on these matters. The New Hampshire Sentinel would be integral to sustaining local support for Lincoln’s federal war policies, which ultimately resulted in victory. And finally, the public’s anguish over Lincoln’s death reflected a profound personal connection between the people and the man who had come to represent the new ideals of the nation.
As one of the oldest continuously published newspapers in the country, founded in 1799, the New Hampshire Sentinel had long been an integral part of daily life for the people of Keene. And as we have seen, the coming of the war saw the paper provide a number of services, from providing weekly updates on military news, to helping to facilitate the coordination of relief efforts. But in the election year of 1864, the newspaper’s role as a political agent reached heightened importance.

In this tumultuous year, the writers of the New Hampshire Sentinel would fulfill three crucial duties. First, by providing news and commentary on the military accomplishments of Union armies, they would attempt to instill public confidence in the progress of the army toward ultimate victory. Second, it would help crystallize the Republican (or Union Party, as it was now called) view of nationalism that had been constructed over the past three years. By unequivocally supporting Lincoln’s war policies, while at the same time vilifying dissenting Peace Democrats, the Sentinel continually argued that the new vision of a postwar nation was worthy of the high cost and sacrifice of war. The expansive powers of the federal government were both necessary and justified in order to save the nation. And finally, the newspaper provided a channel through which the residents of Keene could access information from a wide variety of sources and places throughout the nation. These sources, selectively chosen by the Sentinel staff, helped reaffirm that the new Republican concepts of nation were being supported by fellow citizens throughout the country. As the primary means of fostering a sense of
“imagined community,” the Sentinel provided continual assurance to the people of Keene that they were not alone in their efforts to sustain the war and the federal government.

Editor Thomas Hale began 1864 with an editorial that set the tone for the upcoming year and reiterated the urgency and magnitude of what was currently at stake. “On the recurrence of a new year it has been the custom to dilate with tinsel rhetoric on the events of the past,” he began. “This is all well, and in ordinary times of peaceful, calm, repose it is more than well.” The present time, however, was very different, “fraught with most momentous issues in which are involved not only our own nation’s destiny, but in great measure the peace of the world, and we may well fear, the best hopes of the human race.” Hale explained that “free representative government” was “passing through the most terrible ordeal of fire and battle known in the world’s history.” This war was an assault upon “the freest and most benign government of modern times” which had been inaugurated by privileged men “simply because they could not always control it.”

And now, three years into the war, an initially boastful and overconfident Confederacy had seen that “all attempts to invade the North have been successfully repelled, and the North has been almost wholly free from the desolating effects of war, while the fair and Sunny South has been completely desolated – made one vast cemetery. Her men of wealth are totally ruined, the confederacy is bankrupt and without a currency. Her people are starving and business destroyed.” And while Union forces had endured setbacks and enormous losses, and “many northern households have been bereft of their brightest jewels, and society of its most substantial

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213 Term by Benedict Anderson, Imagined Community.
214 NHS, 12/31/63.
215 ibid.
pillars,” Hale pleaded that these sacrifices were “only the prices which all nations have had to pay for liberties that once fully established and properly enjoyed, are priceless.”

The end of the war was surely near, promised Hale. “Taking our own official reports, and the confessions of the enemy, as the proper criteria, we may hope to see the end of the rebellion by the end of 1864, and looking still farther into the future, we may confidently expect to see a free and united republic stretching from the Canadas to the Gulf, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific shores.” Hale listed the multitude of strategic locations now in possession by Union forces, most notably the Mississippi River. He closed his appeal with excerpts from a recent report of United States General-in-Chief Henry Halleck, who explains that the Confederate territory reclaimed by federal troops was “as large as France or Austria…and twice as large as Great Britain.” Halleck’s words assured readers of the *Sentinel* that along with Union occupation of Southern soil, “the present condition of the enemy, and the immense and still unimpaired military resources of the loyal States, we may reasonably hope the same measure of success as heretofore will bring this Rebellion to a speedy and final termination.”

*State Elections*

As was customary in the first months of a new year, the political focus of the townspeople was on the upcoming March state elections. For the people of New Hampshire, these 1864 elections held profound consequences. As historian Lex Renda explains, the New Hampshire state elections were held earlier than any other state in the Union. As such, Granite State voters “were constantly told that their votes would send messages to people elsewhere.”

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216 Ibid.
217 Ibid.
Thus, the men of New Hampshire would be the first voters to officially support or denounce the actions of the Republican administration in this crucial election year.

So why was it so important for the writers of the pro-Republican *Sentinel* to tenaciously promote support for their party? Historian Adam Smith argues that during the Civil War the rigid two-party system of the late nineteenth century had not yet been firmly entrenched in American politics and that “party identities and alignments were fluid not fixed.” He argues that “for much of the 1850s the party system had been in flux, and the coming of war did nothing to dampen the ubiquitous assumptions of politicians that important groups of voters…were, in Michael Holt’s phrase, ‘up for grabs.’”

This fluidity of party allegiance can be seen New Hampshire politics as well. In 1855 the Republicans had become the majority party in New Hampshire, but in subsequent years overall elections statewide had been decided by 55% or less. So, “although the state experienced a realignment…its politics remained competitive.” As Lex Renda explains, although New Hampshire was “typified by one-party rule, oscillating degrees of loyalty determined the outcomes of elections.” It is apparent that, despite Keene’s previous Republican voting record, the writers of the *Sentinel* were leaving nothing to chance during this crucial referendum on the fate of the nation.

As usual, Thomas Hale used his pen to solicit support for the Republican gubernatorial candidate, framing the state election as important to the national interest. One of the major national political strategies of 1864 was increased emphasis of the concept of anti-partisanship. In fact, the official party of Lincoln was renamed the Union Party to appeal to a broader base. This trend toward a more inclusive approach toward campaigning was evident in Hale’s *New

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221 Ibid., 11.
*Hampshire Sentinel*, which made special efforts to publish political addresses from pro-Union Southerners and pro-Union Democrats. These advocates included “the Union men of Arkansas, …a Kentucky member of Congress, and … Union General Meagher, the Irish General and Patriot, and always a Democrat.” The *Sentinel* also reprinted editorials from the *New York Observer*, “a sturdy champion and defender of the South in years gone by.” Ultimately the *Sentinel* concluded that:

> From all these sources there comes a unanimous voice in behalf of the Union, for vigorously prosecuting the war, until the rebels lay down their arms and unconditionally surrender to the Governmental authority. - No sneaking, cowardly clamoring for peace on any terms – no cry of “stop the war, and call home the soldiers,” no denunciation of the legitimate Administration of the Government – but a hearty loathing and cursing of treason and rebellion. This is honest, sensible, noble and patriotic devotion to country, in the trying and perilous day of the country’s existence.  

The *Sentinel*’s conclusion is a perfect summation of the new Union Party ideology: all Americans must dismiss prior party allegiance and support the Republican administration for the sake of preserving the nation. Conversely, all those who dissented from supporting the Lincoln administration were seen as disloyal, a message Hale underscored when he turned his attention to the Democratic politicians of New Hampshire who stood “painfully in contrast” to the loyal Democrats cited above. These New Hampshire Democrats “denounce these very Union men of the South” and “do not, and will not denounce Jeff Davis and his armed co-conspirators against the life of the nation.” Hale saw their attempts to oust the Republican New Hampshire governor, and thus create a disparity between state and federal political affiliations, as an act of outright

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222 *NHS*, 2/18/64.
disloyalty. However, counseled Hale, “We know the people of New Hampshire are too intelligent and too patriotic to permit reckless ambition to rule or ruin.”

After drawing examples of loyalty to the Union from nationally prominent Democrats, and in turn contrasting them with “disloyal” Democrats of New Hampshire, a week before the March 1864 elections Sentinel editor Thomas Hale took square aim at his competitor across the Keene town square. “Treason in Our Midst,” he asserted about the Democratic Cheshire Republican newspaper and its editor Horatio Kimball. Hale claimed that the Democratic press, in collusion with “Jeff Davis and Co.,” was conspiring “to destroy our Union and Government.” Hale accusingly railed that “the columns of this week’s Cheshire Republican are burdened by an array of figures about taxes, grossly false and exaggerated in detail.” The paper had been acting in a disloyal manner throughout the war claiming, “the Editor of that disloyal sheet commenced his dastardly work of treason the very moment his old party leaders commenced hauling down the American Flag [in 1861].” From the beginning of the conflict the Democratic editor had taken “fiendish satisfaction” in “playing the role of puppet to traitors.” They were not to be trusted. Thus, here we see how the national political strategy of Unionism played out on the local level, helping to align both local and national views.

The Sentinel’s appeals to support the Republican candidate were effective. The headline from the front page of the March 18, 1864 Sentinel proclaimed: “New Hampshire Covered with Glory! Copperheadism Routed.” Returns from the state elections had revealed a convincing

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223 Ibid.
224 NHS, 3/3/64.
victory for the Republican candidate; seventy percent of Keene voters had cast their ballot to reelect Republican Governor Joseph Gilmore.\textsuperscript{225}

\textit{Support for Federal Policies}

But 1864 was unlike every other year of the war in that it was also a presidential election year. Editor Hale and his \textit{Sentinel} staff would have to sustain their efforts over the following months in shaping public opinion. In issue after issue they would continue to promote support for Republican measures, which included the expanding powers of the federal government to prosecute the war. Ultimately they would help crystallize the Republican view of nationalism at the local level, urging the people of Keene to have faith in their federal government to see the war to its conclusion.

For the writers of the \textit{New Hampshire Sentinel}, the push for the presidential election began in the very same issue that announced the state gubernatorial victory in March. “Thus we have inaugurated the Presidential campaign of 1864, and citizens and soldiers may look to the end of the Rebellion, a restored Union, and a redeemed republic!”\textsuperscript{226} But what would this “redeemed republic” look like? The exigencies of war had led the Lincoln Administration and the Republican-led Congress to implement several new federal measures including conscription, emancipation, the recruiting of black troops, and expanding financial programs, which would inevitably alter the relationship between the people and the federal government.

One of the inherent problems of Republican wartime nationalism was justifying the defense of strong centralized authority in a republic predicated on the individual rights of its

\textsuperscript{225} \textit{NHS}, 3/18/64.

\textsuperscript{226} \textit{NHS}, 3/10/64.
citizens. As historian Andre Fleche explains, “Defending order based on authority was a difficult position for any supporter of the American republic to take. Americans had always valued the rights of revolution and self-determination.” However, during the Civil War “northerners found themselves fighting to uphold centralized authority. Any honest defense of the northern cause would need to reconcile these two positions.”227 To Republicans, reconciliation came in the form of emphasizing the fact that the urgency of saving the Union justified this increasing need of centralized power. Only the preservation of the Union would guarantee the protection of individual rights embodied in the Constitution. In Keene Thomas Hale would be the voice of confidence, never wavering from his support of both the president and these new federal policies. Through his newspaper he would build a sense of faith in the federal government, easing the transition from prewar to eventual postwar perceptions of centralized power.

But for Democrats the conflicting strands of Northern nationalism were not so easily reconciled. As the nation’s oldest political party, the Democrats harbored long-entrenched notions of a decentralized authority and, by default, a resistance to, and suspicion of, an increasingly powerful federal government. While the Republican Party remained largely united in their support of the war, the rift between War Democrats and traditional Democrats reflected disagreement over how to achieve party goals. By 1864 many War Democrats had come out in favor of Lincoln’s reelection under the anti-partisan Union Party. But many staunch Democrats viewed this split as yet another example of heavy-handed Republican governance, which demanded strict adherence and support of federal war measures.

What were the core differences between War Democrats and Peace Democrats? Historian Joel Silbey conveniently labels these two Democratic wartime factions as Legitimists and Purists. The Legitimists viewed Union victory over the Confederacy as the only immediate goal and that the details of a postwar nation would be dealt with later. The Purists, on the other hand, still proclaimed their loyalty to the Union but believed in a negotiated peace and a restoration of prewar relations between the federal government and the states. Republicans claimed that Purists, by withholding support for Lincoln’s wartime policies, were disloyal to the nation itself. Republicans even went so far as to claim that by 1863, the Purists hoped for Confederate success, as it would undermine new federal wartime measures, particularly emancipation.228

Many Purist Democrats blamed the division of their party squarely on a pervasive and corrupting sense of New England nationalism. As early as 1863 many leading Democrats had come to see Republican policies as driven by “a puritan-evangelical perspective originating in the history and traditions of New England Religious beliefs. It was a perspective that fostered an aggressive and uncompromising program of government intervention to order and direct individual behavior.”229 In a January 1863 speech to fellow Democrats assembled in New York City, Ohio Congressman Samuel Cox railed against the actions of the Republican Party, which he claimed was “dominated by ‘the Constitution breaking, law defying, negro-loving Phariseeism of New England!’”230 As historian Adam Smith explains, a majority of Democrats felt that “the [Lincoln] administration’s ‘suppression’ of internal dissent was no more than could

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228 Silbey, A Respectable Minority, 96-114. Silbey discusses the rift that emerged among Democrats during the Civil War in Chapter 4 ”The Oddities and Absurdities” of Particular Groups” The Democrats Confront Each Other, 1861-1864.

229 Ibid., 74.

230 Ibid., 75.
be expected from [the Republican Party] that owed its strength to the ‘persecuting, intolerant, hateful, and malignant…Puritan spirit of New England.”’ Smith also notes Democratic Congressman James Brooks’s blatant accusation that the federal government was “now a New England Government and in the main hands of New England men.”

While Republicans had regained many important seats in the 1863 state elections, by 1864 a war-weary North was being tested by the high cost of the conflict for new Union ideals. The nomination of Democratic candidate George McClellan presented a formidable challenge to Republican presidential reelection hopes. McClellan, former General-in-Chief of the Union army, appealed to many War Democrats and remained a favorite of the enlisted men. In addition, his well-known dislike of emancipation gave the “Purists” hope for a negotiated peace to end the war. Amidst the sagging morale that pervaded the North through most of 1864, the New Hampshire Sentinel would continue to call for public support of federal measures, while also painting the Democrats as disloyal and even treasonous in their actions.

**Emancipation & Use of Black Soldiers**

One of the central issues of the 1864 presidential election, and arguably the most divisive action taken by Abraham Lincoln during the war, was the Emancipation Proclamation. By executive order, the Emancipation Proclamation freed all slaves in states, or parts of states, that remained in open rebellion on January 1, 1863. Confirming fears of many Democrats North and South, the measure represented a drastic expansion of federal powers over the sovereignty of slave owners, exacerbating the debate over the role of the federal government in the Union. As Eric Foner explains, the Emancipation Proclamation “marked a watershed in American life.”

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The measure immediately “altered the nature of the Civil War, the relationship of the federal government to slavery, and the course of American history.”\(^{233}\)

In Keene, Editor Thomas Hale had defended Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation from the outset. As early as October 1862, when the initial backlash to the proposed measure occurred among both proslavery and antislavery factions, Hale responded immediately. In October 1862 he urged Americans to “stand by the President” whom Hale believed to be “honest and patriotic.” He warned that “to quarrel with the President upon any measure he may deem necessary for suppressing the rebellion, is to aid and gratify the rebels in their work of destruction.”\(^{234}\) In early March 1863, two months after the Emancipation Proclamation became official, Hale wrote a rebuttal to the Democratic claim that the Lincoln’s measure was “unwarranted by the Constitution,” that the president had violated the faith of the American people, and that the measure would ultimately prove “fatal to all hopes of a restored Union.”\(^{235}\) Hale retorted that a “restored Union” in Democrats’ eyes meant “the Constitution as it is and the Union as it was.” He warned that the secession leaders and their Northern sympathizers would “strike hands again in fraternal amity, and slavery is to be the trump card to win for them their former political supremacy.”\(^{236}\) To the citizens of Keene, Hale defended emancipation on practical terms, explaining that by rules of war, all property that could be used to aid the war effort was considered contraband and open to forfeiture. It was a clever approach. Moral arguments could be, and had been, dismissed by Democrats as ideological differences of opinion. Framing his argument as a legal issue, however, left little room for rebuttal. By Democrats’ own

\(^{234}\) NHS 10/9/62. Many Democrats felt Lincoln had overstepped his bounds by targeting slaves in the states in rebellion, while Radical Republicans thought the measure too lenient.
\(^{235}\) NHS, 3/5/63. This wording was an excerpt from the “Resolution of the Democratic State Convention” of November 20, 1862.
\(^{236}\) NHS, 3/5/63.
definition slaves were considered property. Thus, the federal government was fully justified in claiming rights to Southern “property” in a time of war.237

During the first two years of the war, Thomas Hale and the Sentinel newspaper had largely avoided any use of moral argument against the evils of slavery. But in March 1863, for the first time, Hale uses just this tactic as a second defense of the Emancipation Proclamation. “Either the slaves are men, or they are not. If men, or persons, as most northern people regard them, and as the Constitution styles them, then by every principle laid down by our Revolutionary fathers they are entitled to the inalienable rights of man…to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”238 In the context of the Sentinel’s prior allusions to slavery, this was a remarkable statement. Not only did Hale portray slaves as individuals with the rights of citizens, but he also linked to them to legacy of the American Revolution, an ideal so cherished by New Englanders. The statement may give us a glimpse at Thomas Hale’s true sentiments that he had kept muted for the sake of party unity. It was also the newspaper’s first move toward laying the groundwork for a post-emancipation restored Union, in which the ideals Hale had described would eventually become a reality.

Another tactic employed by the Sentinel in defense of emancipation was using the voices of the soldiers, who by now had gained a venerated credibility through months of hard service to the cause. In October 1863 the Sentinel claimed that “another feature in the army, as manifested in letters from officers and men, is the radical change of sentiment as to the slavery question among those who, when at home, were quite tolerant of the institution, and opposed to agitation.” The newspaper claimed that thousands of “proslavery” men “after serving in the

237 Ibid.
238 Ibid.
field, where they have witnessed the spirit of both master and slave, have become intensely anti-
slavery.” In fact, claimed Hale, many Democrats fretted about sending Democratic men into the
army due to “the melancholy fact that they almost all turn abolitionists.”

The *Sentinel* printed a letter from a Keene soldier, which demonstrated his support for
emancipation. “I suppose there is a great deal of howling about the ‘niggers,’” the soldier began.
“I say anything to put down this rebellion. By taking away the negroes of rebels we take away
their support, for they raise the provisions which support the rebel army.” The man claimed that
through all of his travels throughout the Confederacy “not an able bodied man did I see; they are
all in the army, and now take away their negroes and you take away their corn, bread, and meat,
for this is what they live on.”

In a November 1863 editorial Hale ramped up his support for emancipation as a proper
and necessary measure, clearly linking the nation’s current suffering and strife to the institution
of slavery. “There has been a conviction among thinking, sober minded people that the first rebel
gun fired upon Fort Sumter gave the death blow to slavery.” Hale explained to the people of
Keene that the experience of war had convinced “the Union men in the slave States, and large
owners of slave property…to a great extent” that slavery was doomed. The horrible experience
of war had “removed prejudices from loyal minds, and opened the eyes of all who love good
government and desire a prosperous and happy country to live in.”

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239 NHS 10/29/63.; Chandra Manning also argues a similar trend regarding soldiers’ changing views on slavery in *What this Cruel War was Over*. Earl Hess also contends that “Even soldiers who were anti-abolitionist before the
war eventually supported emancipation” after serving in the field. Hess. *Liberty, Virtue, and Progress*, 97.
240 NHS 10/29/63.
241 NHS, 11/15/63.
As evidence of this sea change in thinking Hale cites the people of the border state of Maryland who “by the election of four out of five members of Congress distinctly pledged to Emancipation” as well as by “the election of Gen. Goldsborough, the Emancipation candidate for State Controller, by 25,000 majority, and by electing an overwhelming majority to the Legislature in favor of calling a convention to provide for Emancipation, [Maryland has] in a most emphatic manner decreed the doom of slavery in that State.”

Hale continued,

Slavery has been used as an instrument to break up our government and to destroy the Union, and in defending the Union and Government that instrument must be wrested from those who thus use it. Maryland, a majority of whose people are loyal and true, sees this, and feels that although she has not forfeited the legal right to hold slaves, yet such treasonable uses have been made of it, the institution is practically dead — that in the nostrils of good Union loving men it has become an offence — a stench not to be much longer borne. That its continuance even by permission of the National Government, cannot be profitable either in a pecuniary, social, or moral sense is now doubtless the settled conviction of a large mass of Union slave-holders. The Government is paying $300 for every slave of loyal owners enlisted into the Union army, and now is the time, argue the patriotic Marylanders, to get rid of what cannot longer remain with either profit or pleasure. They are therefore ready to go for Emancipation at once...

What is significant is that Hale did not avoid the controversial issue of emancipation, but instead he increasingly depicted emancipation as one of the key components of a war-forged nationalism. He promoted emancipation as vital to both Union success and the survival of the nation itself. By the presidential election year of 1864, the New Hampshire Sentinel had compiled a steady and consistent record of support for emancipation, and in this crucial campaign the paper’s crusade to end slavery would become even more ardent. In April of 1864

242 Ibid.
243 Hale’s description of Marylanders’ outlook toward Emancipation here is largely propagandistic. In October 1864, when a new Maryland state constitution that supported Emancipation of slaves was drafted and put to a vote it passed by a mere 50.31%, with 30,174 in favor and 29,536 against. Philip Cox, Civil War Maryland: Stories from the Old Line State. (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2008).
prominent Cheshire County Republican Amos Parker delivered a lengthy speech in neighboring Fitzgerald, New Hampshire. The following week the citizens of Keene (those who did not attend in person) were able to read the entire speech in the pages of the *New Hampshire Sentinel*. It was a powerful oration, one that both reflected and reaffirmed the Republican values of nationalism that had been constructed over the past three years of war, most notably the concept of emancipation. Parker’s speech represents the most sympathetic and progressive views of slaves as individuals to appear in the town’s newspaper thus far. “Prejudice against color is slavery’s last legacy to our afflicted country, but it cannot last forever,” Parker claimed, alluding to the hopes of a postwar nation. “The conduct of the slaves in this terrible conflict, amid the greatest social convulsions, is far beyond what was expected of them in their degraded condition.” Despite the fears and predictions of proslavery advocates “there have been no insurrections or wreaking of vengeance upon masters, but [instead] they seem patiently to bide their time.” Parker railed that it was time for “justice, though tardy, now be done to the African race,” claiming that “their meek forgiveness, long suffering and devotion to the Union demand it at our hands.” The action of African Americans during the war had demonstrated their true devotion to the Union. “Shall not their fiery zeal in battle, their prayers for our success when our hearts hesitate to acknowledge their humanity – shall not all these considerations shame or melt us into justice, make us forget their darker complexions, and throw over them the broad shield of the Constitution?”

The experience of war had altered many Northern people’s views not only of slavery, but of African Americans themselves. Slaves had not been complacent in their station in life as many white Southerners had insisted but had instead deserted their owners by the thousands.

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244 NHS, 5/5/64.
when the opportunity arose.\textsuperscript{245} And Amos Parker’s commendation about blacks’ “fiery zeal in battle” represents another radical measure taken by the Lincoln Administration: the use of black soldiers.

One provision of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation was approval for the recruitment of black troops. This policy was met with much criticism and doubt among many Northerners, largely fueled by long-engrained notions about the inherent inferiority of African Americans. As an untried experiment, many Northerners questioned the ability of Colored Troops to withstand the rigors and responsibilities of military service. As one historian notes, many white Northerners “remained skeptical about the wisdom of arming black men. Gnawing doubts about the character of black people prompted even some committed opponents of slavery to question whether black men would, or could, fight.”\textsuperscript{246}

Through his writings in the \textit{New Hampshire Sentinel}, Thomas Hale consistently portrayed black soldiers in a positive light, helping to foster support for the policy. To the people of Keene, New Hampshire, far removed from the battlefront and so unfamiliar with the presence of African Americans in general (the 1860 census reports only two African American residents), these reports played an integral role, helping to allay these fears by providing evidence of their valor and upstanding behavior under fire. By doing so, Hale helped establish legitimacy of the effort from an early stage, claiming that black soldiers could and would fight for the Northern cause and that the recruiting of black soldiers was effective and right. In June 1863, Hale writes, “As our readers know, a full regiment of colored volunteers – the 54\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{245} Foner, \textit{The Fiery Trial}, 167. According to Foner, by 1864 an estimated 400,000 slaves had escaped from their owners during the war.
Massachusetts – left the Old Bay State a few weeks since for the Department of the South where a brigade of five colored regiments is being organized by Gen. Wild, a most popular and efficient officer.” Hale reported that the 54th “excited the admiration of very many onlookers who have not hitherto favored the arming of negroes, such was their manly and soldierly bearing.”

One common belief among many Northerners in early 1863 was that black troops would fail to do their duty once under enemy fire. The Sentinel editor was quick to help dispel this myth. In June 1863 he informed the people of Keene, “We have the reports of most gallant and successful fighting by colored troops. Gen [Nathaniel] Banks testifies to their bravery and daring at Port Hudson, as well as to their orderly conduct and good discipline. And at Milliken’s Bend, more recently, they displayed the most heroic conduct.” Even at this very early stage Hale had come to a definitive conclusion. “The question as to the utility of colored troops is now settled. None but snarling, depraved copperhead politicians will now complain of their being employed.” In this last sentence Hale transforms his argument into a political statement. Support of black troops was not only good for the war effort, but it was a requisite of loyalty to the nation. By drawing such clearly defined lines, Hale placed the service of black soldiers squarely into the struggle to preserve the Union, and those who denounced their efforts were enemies to the cause.

But even by mid-1864 the Democratic press was still eager to exploit any opportunity to promulgate the notion of the inferiority of black troops. On July 30, 1864, a failed attempt to break through Confederate lines at Petersburg, Virginia, resulted in a disastrous Union loss that incurred almost 4,000 Northern casualties. One of the units in that attack that suffered heavy casualties was...
losses was Brig. Gen. Edward Ferrero’s Fourth Division of United States Colored Troops. When some of the Northern press attempted to pin the blame on these black soldiers for the defeat, Thomas Hale quickly rallied to their defense. “The opposition newspapers have clamored a good deal about negro troops leading the assault on Petersburg and they very generally attribute the failure to their inefficiency,” he explained. “But ‘facts are stubborn things’ (borrowing a line from Founding Father John Adams) and put to flight a multitude of rebel and copperhead assertions.” He assured his readers that “the testimony of officers engaged in the fatal assault is that the colored troops went forward resolutely and bravely, and being for the first time under fire, behaved as well as any troops could have been expected under the circumstances in which they were placed.”

Along with praising the bravery and character of United States Colored Troops, Hale also used other tacks to undermine opponents’ efforts. In 1863, for example, the Sentinel was quick to point out the flaws in the Democratic argument against use of Negro troops on a more pragmatic level. Late that year, an Iowa congressman proposed a resolution that called for more vigorous recruitment of black soldiers in order to “relieve the demands for Northern labor, and prevent [Northern white] men from being taken from their homes and industrial pursuits.” Among congressmen opposed to the measure, explained the Sentinel, was Democratic Representative Daniel Marcy of New Hampshire. Claimed the paper, “He and his brother Copperheads are ready enough to croak about a draft, but they are opposed to any measure whereby men of ‘African descent’ may relieve the white men of the burdens of the war.”

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250 Ibid.
251 NHS, 2/25/64.
As we have seen, as early as 1863 Thomas Hale’s newspaper had clearly defined support of black soldiers as a matter of loyalty, faith that the government was doing its utmost to preserve the nation. So, when in October 1864 word came that the Confederacy was considering raising and arming black troops, Hale leapt at the chance to excoriate Democratic opponents through a very clever approach. “Alarming for Copperheads,” read the bold headline. “The rebel authorities are seriously proposing to arm negro slaves to fight the battles of secession and rebellion, and our copperhead friends, who have been so much horrified at receiving colored volunteers into the service to fight for the Union and Government, will please make note of this” Hale asked rhetorically that if it was so “‘atrocious,’ as the [Democrat newspapers] N.H. Patriot and Cheshire Republican have frequently asserted, to arm negroes to fight in defence of the Union, and for the protection of law, life and property, how great must be the atrocity when negro slaves are armed for the destruction of these precious inheritances!” The Sentinel then reprinted excerpts from the Confederate newspaper the Richmond Enquirer, as well as a letter from Louisiana Governor Henry Allen, both advocating conscription of slaves into the army. Hale relished the opportunity to point out, “If Northern copperheads have not yet learned that colored soldiers can and do fight well when in the service of freedom and the Union, the leading and more intelligent rebels have…” The editorial was a blistering political attack, which made Northern Democrats’ opposition to the use of black soldiers seem even more futile. If even the slaveholding South saw African American soldiers as a viable option, how could Northern Democrats continue to question the measure?

252 NHS, 10/27/64.
**Federal Conscription**

Another major expansion of federal powers during the Civil War was the use of conscription. Enacted in March 1863, the Enrollment Act authorized the federal government to draft men between the ages of 20 and 45 into military service. In addition, each state was divided by congressional districts, and within each federal agents oversaw the conscription process. The action sparked a backlash across the North that resulted in several protests. The most violent was the New York City Draft Riot, which ravaged the city over four days in July.

As he had done with federal emancipation measures, Thomas Hale immediately rose to the defense of federal conscription. Following the violence in New York City, the *Sentinel* reported that Major General John Dix, commander of the Department of the East, had issued a proclamation in response to the draft riots. The paper explained that in the missive, Dix “shows the absolute necessity of the draft, as well as its justice. He argues its constitutionality, and cites the authority of some of the greatest of American names in favor of a draft. He sets forth that it is the law of the land, and resistance to it is revolt against the constituted authority of the country.” Along with its constitutionality, Dix stressed “the lightness with which it bears upon the community, and contrasts it with the all-devouring conscription law of the rebels. He denounces those who array themselves by word or deed against the law and tells them that they will be treated ‘as enemies of the country and of mankind.’”

Locally, in August it was announced that 623 men Keene were eligible for the draft. The first round of names was drawn in early September. By mid-October, it was announced

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253 *NHS* 8/20/63.
254 Ibid.
255 *NHS* 9/2/63.
that 47 men had been selected. A month later the draft authorities informed Keene that their present quota was now 58 men. Although there were no outright protests in Keene, like most Northern towns, reaction to the draft was tepid. Writing from Keene in October 1863, a young man named J.H. Kingsbury describes the ambivalence of the townspeople to his friend Charles Wilcox, “The draft which has been the principal topic of conversation for sometime past has got to be a worn out subject, and is hardly alluded to now – though I think the President’s last proclamation will revive the subject again. It will come pretty hard on us who escaped it before. I will send you a list of the drafted and will mark those who went.” He then added that their friend Blake “has not gone west yet and do not know as he is going now. The draft knocked his plans in the head.”

In order to meet the quota, the town officials agreed to offer financial incentives to those who enlisted. In late August they “voted to pay drafted soldiers or their substitutes ten days after being mustered into service $300 dollars each,” an amount comparable to other communities at this time, “and to make the same provisions for their families, residing in town, as are made for the families of volunteers.” In November “the town voted to pay a bounty of $300 and advance the government bounties to all citizens who may volunteer to fill our quota. The selectmen were also authorized to make up any deficiency by hiring substitutes at a price not to exceed $300 in addition to advancing the government bounties, and were authorized to borrow money for that purpose.”

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256 NHS, 11/12/63.
257 Murdock, Patriotism Limited, 24-25.
258 J.H. Kingsbury to Charles Wilcox 10/19/63. Wilcox Papers.
259 NHS, 9/2/63.
260 NHS 12/3/63.
As the people of Keene attempted to fill its draft quota, Hale made special effort to report on how other communities were answering the national call. In October he provided the people of Keene with an example of another New Hampshire town’s response to the government draft. “The conscripts of Laconia, [New Hampshire] on Wednesday evening, the day after the draft for that town took place, went in for a general good time,” he explained. “They gathered together and with fife and drum paraded the streets, while the boys illuminated the place with bonfires.”

And referring to New Hampshire’s neighbors to the west the Sentinel boasted that, “The Vermont quota is more than full. The Standard [newspaper] says the men whom the state now sends forth are among her best sons – men for the most part who go to fight and to see the war through. All honor, say we, to the gallant state whose star never sets.”

The last line was a direct reference to Vermont’s Republican Party, whose candidates had been consistently elected to office since the party’s formation in 1854.

The New Hampshire Sentinel also had glowing praise for the “Noble State” of Indiana during this time, proclaiming “She will allow no battles for the Union to be fought without she is represented where soldiers are most needed. She has been officially credited with an excess of 1,686 men over her quotas under all calls, and is now forming eleven regiments – all of which are expected to be filled by the 10th of November. Indiana believes with [Republican Maryland Congressman] Winter Davis that ‘the road to peace is over the battle-field.’” So here again is a conscious effort by the New Hampshire Sentinel to expose the local of people of Keene to “loyal” support for the draft from fellow countrymen in both New Hampshire and in other states. By doing so, Hale could strengthen the sense of solidarity between the local community and

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261 NHS, 10/15/63.
262 NHS, 1/14/64.
263 NHS, 10/29/63.; Winter Davis was a Representative from Maryland who was considered a Radical Republican.
fellow Americans. Whereas he had previously promoted support through editorial, he could now demonstrate that supporting the federal measure at this time was the right thing to do.

Conversely, Thomas Hale and the Sentinel made it clear that to oppose the federal draft was an act of disloyalty to the nation. And the writers of the newspaper used their prominent platform to publicly denounce those who refused to do their duty to the nation. In April 1863, immediately following the passage of the Enrollment Act, the Sentinel had reported, “Nearly a thousand of the cowardly copperheads of this state have fled to Canada since the election, for fear of a draft.”

Once conscription began Thomas Hale did his best to commend the local federal draft agents in their efforts, in a sense humanizing them to the people of Keene. “The Board of Enrolment at West Lebanon, [New Hampshire] is emphatically a working one,” he reported. “The men composing it take their breakfast at half past five o’clock in the morning and work till half past nine in the evening, stopping long enough to eat dinner and supper.”

In late November a new recruiting office opened in Keene with the hopes that volunteers would help contribute to the town’s quota. The Sentinel optimistically declared, “The very liberal bounty offered by the town, in addition to the government bounties and State aid to families should secure the enlistment of a sufficient number of our young men to fill our entire quota.” The newspaper also reminded the public, “Only one week more (until Dec. 10) is given for volunteering.” By mid-December it was reported fourteen substitutes and twenty Keene recruits were mustered in at the federal conscription office so that “our quota is already more

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264 NHS, 4/2/63.
265 NHS, 10/29/63.
266 NHS, 12/3/63.
than half filled, and the prospect is good that the entire number will be obtained in less than a week.”267 Two weeks later the Sentinel posted that “up to the present time of writing [Keene has] enlisted 41 good and true men, besides a number who did not pass examination. Only two or three more are wanted to fill the quota.”268

By January of 1864 Keene had reached its quota as specified under the draft.269 Thomas Hale used the opportunity to heap praise upon the community for meeting the goal. After reaching the quota Hale gleefully asked, “Has any town done better in the matter of enlisted men?”270 He also took the opportunity to foster state pride claiming, “The number of men that will be secured to the army from New Hampshire, under the draft, will not be far from 2500. Massachusetts, with three or four times the population, furnishes only 1830, all told. Are we not entitled to the banner?”271 This passage provides another example of how state affiliation remained a powerful factor in building nationalism. It also demonstrates again how national loyalty can be built upon local or state loyalty.

In January 1864 the newspaper listed the names of all then men who had enlisted to meet Keene’s quota under the first federal draft. However, the Sentinel was quick to call public attention to four local men who had failed to fulfill their duty after enlisting. “[Stephen] Frenchmen [Thomas] Dumar and [Samuel] Wallace deserted like dogs, and [William] Raymond unhappily cut off his right great toe within one hour after receiving his bounty.”272 And again in April 21, 1864, the Sentinel publicly chastised another local deserter and bounty jumper. “Peter

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267 NHS 12/10/63.
268 NHS 12/24/63.
269 NHS, 1/14/64.
270 NHS, 12/24/63.
271 NHS, 10/29/63.
272 NHS, 1/14/64.
Dyer is a decided scalawag. He enlisted in the 22d Mass. Regiment, deserted, then entered the NH 14th, and then ran off to Canada. He then returned to Westmoreland [New Hampshire] to see his wife, with whom he had lived a quarrelsome life, but who had some money, and here he was arrested and brought to Keene by Messrs Aldrich & Davenport.”273

And later that year the Sentinel described in great detail the arrest of yet another local deserter under the headline “An Old Sinner Caught.” Barney Mulligan was “a deserter by profession, and a hardened sinner in more senses than one.” He had recently been arrested in a “house of not very good repute” on the outskirts of Keene which was “kept by Elisa Wilbur to whom Mulligan had been recently married.” The newspaper reported that Mulligan had “deserted from the army two or three times” after receiving a bounty as a substitute. His wife “was made to confess the stealing of a dress from one of our merchants, and to pay for it – to leave the State and ‘sin no more.’”274 The message was clear: deserters were sinners who belonged to the unscrupulous and seedy class of society.

Federal Currency / War Bonds

The United States government enacted several financial measures during the war that also represented a significant expansion of federal powers. Prior to the Civil War most banking was done through state banks. During the war, however, the issuance of federal paper currency and the sale of federal security bonds brought the public into greater financial connection with the federal banking system. These new measures were yet another example of a changing relationship between the local people of Keene and the federal government.275 And here again

273 NHS, 4/21/64.
274 NHS, 9/29/64.
275 By 1865 three of Keene’s banks would be designated as national banks. KHC, Upper Ashuelot, 112.
the *New Hampshire Sentinel* would facilitate this change, depicting support for the policies as sound, patriotic, and beneficial to the Union.

Beginning in 1862 and expanded in 1863, the United States government passed a series of Legal Tender Acts, which authorized the government to issue federal currency backed by the federal government’s promise honor the value of these notes. The new currency, known as “Greenbacks,” did cause some concern among many in the public. In February 1863, during a closed-door session of the Keene Democratic Committee, local Democrats discussed the issue of the town debt. Democrats favored paying off town debts as soon as possible. They claimed “the true business policy is to borrow, if at all, when money was sacred and dear, and pay when it was cheap and plenty.” They felt that the town leaders “had been pursuing an opposite policy” and feared that the mounting debt would have to be paid “at a time when the national finance will leave the country in a state of poverty and great distress.” One prominent Democrat, Joshua Colony, “wished to pay the town debts while they could be paid in Abe Lincoln’s ‘greenback scabs.’” This record reveals two important revelations. First, we see how the president was becoming the face of the federal government, as it was “Abe Lincoln’s greenbacks” that were being discussed. And second, the Democrats had no faith whatsoever in the long term security of the new federal monetary system, predicting the inevitable collapse of national financial policies that would destroy the national economy.

And the Democrats of Keene were not alone in their skepticism. In 1863 a prominent New Hampshire man was dissatisfied over being paid in U.S. currency for money owed to him by the state. He then sued the State of New Hampshire, claiming that “Greenbacks” were

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276 Records of the Keene Democratic Committee, Meeting minutes of February 11, 1864, NHHS.

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unconstitutional and thus invalid. Hale again publicly came to the defense of the federal measure. He reminded the people of Keene, “Our readers are all probably aware that ‘Greenbacks’ were made a legal tender by act of Congress.” As to the constitutionality of the measure, “It has been argued before the New York courts,” and upon reaching “the Court of Appeals, the highest tribunal in that state, the question was decided in favor of the constitutionality of the act.” Hale assured readers, “Now we trust the New Hampshire court is not going to overthrow both the National and New York state authority by ‘one fell swoop,’” but regardless, “There can be however no immediate danger, for the act must stand as valid and is in full force, until pronounced unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States.”

In addition to federal currency, beginning in March 1864 the federal government offered registered security bonds to the public as a way to raise money for the war effort. In May the New Hampshire Sentinel included a full column advertisement explaining in great detail the workings of the new bond system. The column explained that, according to the rules of the federal measure, these bonds were “exempt from taxation by or under any state or municipal authority,” making them not only appealing to potential subscribers but also a direct financial link to the federal reserve. The column boasted an impressive and reliable interest rate and subscriptions in increments of $50.00, allowing for both large and small investors. Subscriptions were available at “all National Banks which are depositories of public money and all respectable banks and bankers throughout the country (acting as agents of the National Depository Banks).”

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277 NHS, 10/29/63.
278 NHS, 5/12/64.
Another 1864 ad endorsed federal bonds, saying there was “no security so good for a permanent, safe and profitable investment as that of the Government. This is the cool judgment of all experienced financial men.”279 By promoting these bonds the newspaper not only helped forge new connections between the public and the federal government, but also helped build confidence in the government as a steady, reliable institution.

Along with the monetary incentives, the Sentinel also advocated the buying of federal bonds as a patriotic duty. On September 15, 1864, the Sentinel included an amusing anecdote, in the style of Benjamin Franklin’s morals, titled “Poor Richard’s Reasons for Buying United States Securities.” The story told the tale of two citizens, one rich named Mr. Smith and one called “poor Richard.” Poor Richard was known by all to be a “very prudent and industrious, and withal, wise man.” One day the citizens of his hometown were shocked to hear that poor Richard had recently taken the meager savings he had managed to accumulate over years of hard work and invested in “some of Uncle Sam’s three year notes, paying seven and three tenths percent Interest.” Mr. Smith, who had made tremendous profits through railroad stocks, asked why poor Richard had invested in United States’ stock. After explaining several sound economic reasons poor Richard then confided, “I confess, too, that I wanted to help that dear old country, which is my home and my country.” In reply Mr. Smith admitted he had not thought of this investment and that there was “a good deal of sense” in what poor Richard had told him. The story then concludes with Mr. Smith on his way to the bank to invest “two or three thousand dollars” in government bonds and poor Richard walking home “with that calm and placid air which indicated the serenity of his disposition and the consciousness of doing right towards his

279 NHS, 9/29/64.
country and his fellow man.” Thus, the message was: buying bonds was not only patriotic but financially sound as well, underscoring the image of a stable, robust federal government with a bright future.

1864 Presidential Campaign

_Copperheads as Disloyal_

In late 1863 there appeared a short story in Keene’s _New Hampshire Sentinel_. A young boy was sitting on his father’s lap one evening in their parlor discussing the war. The father explained that the war had been started by abolitionists, and “if it were not for them the war would have ended long ago!” The boy then confessed that one local man, a known abolitionist, had “called you a ‘copperhead.’ What is a copperhead papa?” The father did not reply but instead simply sent his son to bed with a goodnight kiss.

But the man remained troubled by his young boy’s question.

He did not feel prepared to answer it. There was an uncomfortable feeling in his breast that all was not right. What was he doing for the country in this time of need? …While brave men were laying down their lives and brave women, all over the North were setting aside sorrow and devoting themselves to the wants of the Government, he and his contemporaries were exerting their power and influence to retain the miserable curse of slavery for future generations. These and other reflections engaged his attention through the night- after which he was no longer a “copperhead.”

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280 _NHS_, 9/15/64.
281 _NHS_, 11/5/63.
282 Ibid.
The moralistic story above reflects one of the major themes of Republican wartime nationalism. The Republicans perceived their views, which stressed unequivocal support for the federal government and its wartime policies, as the only loyal ideology. The Peace Democrats, or Copperheads, who advocated an end to the war through negotiated peace were labeled as immoral (as the story above implies) and treasonous – a legitimate threat to the nation’s future. The *New Hampshire Sentinel*, in conjunction with Republican papers throughout the North, would continually drive home this message through a variety of tactics, hoping to build consensus for the Republican ticket in November.

Political historian Lex Renda explains that “Republicans, when not defending themselves, vilified the Democrats as lackeys of the Confederacy. Because Democrats did not control any of the machinery of government, Republicans had to identify them with a foe that transcended party and government. As a result, Republicans made ‘Union’ appeals in an effort to make loyalty to the administration synonymous with support of the government.”283 Adam Smith takes this argument a step further explaining that the war itself represented “a failure of national character” and that “Northerners who resisted the call for loyalty even at such a crucial moment in the life of the nation were tarnished with the same badge of dishonor as the rebels in arms.”284

On September 15, 1864, the *Sentinel* ran a story about a recent Democratic stump speech in nearby Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire. What the writer’s intentions were can only be conjectured, but the wording is intriguing. It read as follows, (with no omissions or edits):

“Harvey Carleton, Esq., of Keene, gave a lecture in Fitzwilliam Monday evening, in behalf of the

283 Renda, *Running on the Record*, 95.
284 Smith, *No Party Now*, 139.
McClellan interest. On the morning following (Tuesday) Daniel G. Carter, a prominent
democrat, and a saddler, committed suicide, by hanging himself in his shop.\footnote{NHS, 9/15/64.} The passage
seems to imply that the moral dilemma of being a Democrat in this nation at war had
overwhelmed Carter, driving him to taking his own life. Incidentally, this was not the first time
the writers of the *Sentinel* had linked Copperheadism with suicide. In 1863 the paper had
reported on a wealthy citizen of Indiana named Solomon Henshaw who had “committed
suicide…because he had become a member of the Knights of the Golden Circle, and their
treasonable character so troubled him that he could not bear the odium.”\footnote{NHS, 4/9/63.}

In August 1864, as the Democratic National Convention met in Chicago to select their
party’s presidential candidate, Thomas Hale assured the voters in Keene,

> whoever may be nominated, and on whatever platform the nominee may be
placed…there never was a more certain future event than the re-election of
Abraham Lincoln in November next. It is against him as the chosen President of
the American people that Jeff Davis & his co-conspirators rebelled in order to
break up our Government, for a like purpose they are now fighting. And against
him rebel agents from the South and copperhead conspirators at the North are
working.

Recently, “croakers, grumblers, and mischief makers have had things pretty much all their own
way. The approaching Presidential election has been the chosen time for them to make all the
noise possible; and while they only have been disturbing the political elements, the earnest
Union men and friends of the Administration have devoted their time to matters more
immediately connected with the war.” Hale promised that “while the brave soldiers in the field,
reinforced by 300,000 new recruits, are dealing final and fatal blows to armed treason, their
friends at home will prepare to put an end to conspiracies in their rear; and the Administration,
with the Government in its hands, will be right loyally sustained, alike by soldier and freeman.”

As it turns out, the members of the Chicago Convention selected George B. McClellan and George H. Pendleton as their Democratic ticket. And as Adam Smith explains, “Most Confederates did, in fact, see McClellan’s candidacy as their last, best hope for achieving independence, and Unionists seized upon any evidence from Southern newspapers that indicated this.” And this evidence did not have to necessarily come from Southern newspapers. To emphasize the image of Democrats as disloyal to the Union, the *Sentinel* reprinted a story from the *New York Times* that described a squad of Confederate prisoners who had recently been marched through Washington D.C. As the Rebels passed a banner with the names of Lincoln and Johnson the men “greeted it with hissing and groans.” But as they came to a flag for the Democratic candidates of McClellan and Pendleton “they stopped and gave it three hearty enthusiastic cheers.” The writer joked that “our ‘Democratic’ brethren” would probably like to allow them to vote in the upcoming elections.

On September 22, Thomas Hale again denounced what he viewed as the hypocrisy of the Democratic politicians who, he claimed, professed love of the Union and the Constitution while at the same time were attempting to undermine the Lincoln Administration’s efforts to crush the Confederacy. The Democrats had “not only failed to condemn the armed traitors, but openly threatened and declared war on the men who are earnestly endeavouring to save the Union and Constitution.” As evidence Hale cited their repeated efforts to call for an end to hostilities, bring the soldiers home, and claim military efforts a failure. However Hale promised that “a loyal

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287 NHS, 09/01/64
289 NHS, 9/29/64.
people, truly devoted to the Union and Constitution, [will] condemn them at the polls on the second Tuesday of next November.” Following Hale’s preamble, the Sentinel included the full text of an address issued by the Union [Republican] Party’s national committee, which repeated Hale’s assertions and condemnations of the Democratic presidential platform.

And in that same paper there appeared an appeal from the Boston Daily Herald, which echoed the sentiments of the National Union Committee and Hale’s Sentinel. The Boston Daily Herald proclaimed the “present hour” was “full of hope for the Union, promising a glorious victory over its foreign and domestic foes and a lasting and honorable peace.” They asked, “Is it not unpardonable when General Grant and General Sherman and the brave soldiers under them are making such heroic efforts to maintain the integrity of the nation and to preserve our liberty for any man or any press to be engaged in exciting the people in the free states to oppose filling up the ranks of the Union armies, to strike the final blow which shall give to us peace!”

So here in this one issue of the New Hampshire Sentinel we see testimonials from Keene resident Thomas Hale, The Boston Daily Herald, and the National Union Committee, all proclaiming the same themes in support of the Lincoln Administration. Thus, the residents of Keene would see that same message coming from authorities at the town, regional, and national level, contributing to a sense of unity with local and national supporters of the war. Here again is an effort to fuse the local with the national in building a consensus for the upcoming election.

Perhaps the most damaging threat to Northern morale, and hence to Lincoln’s reelection bid, was the staggering human cost of the war. By spring of the 1864 election year, 49 men from

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290 NHS, 9/22/64.
291 Ibid.
292 Ibid.
Keene had died in the war, four in the past three weeks alone. Perhaps to remind the citizenry of the purpose of these painful losses, in June, on the heels of disastrous news coming from Virginia regarding Grant’s bloody advance toward Richmond, the *Sentinel* published the entire text of the Civil War song “Our Heroes,” which celebrates the glorious sacrifice of Union soldiers for the nation.

Yet, loved ones have fallen  
And still where they sleep,  
A sorrowing Nation  
Shall silently weep  

And Spring’s fairest flowers  
In gratitude strew  
O’er those who have cherished  
The Red White and Blue!  

But glory immortal  
Is waiting them now  
And chaplets unfading  
Shall bind every brow  

When called by the trumpet  
At Time’s great review  
They stand, who defended  
The Red White and Blue!  

Tributes like the one above reflect the public’s sacrosanct respect toward those who had given their lives for the country. They helped build on this intimate and personal strand of nationalism that connected Keene with both the concept of “Union,” as well as to the thousands of other communities who had lost loved ones to the cause. As Earl Hess explains, “It was easier

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293 A total of 584 Keene men served during the war. Griffin, *History of Keene*, 529.

294 *NHS*, 6/2/64.
to accept the loss of men if the soldiers were seen as exemplars of all that was good in Americans; thus reinforcing self-images of the nation, the culture, and the issues involved in the war.”

Along with the dead, veterans of the battlefield had by 1864 garnered tremendous respect in the public’s view. After all, who was better suited to speak for the future of the nation than those who had put their very lives on the line for the preservation of the Union? As historian Gary Gallagher explains, “Union armies…functioned as the most powerful national symbol and unifying institution” who “represented self-sacrifice reminiscent of the Continental soldiers who had followed George Washington.” The New Hampshire Sentinel utilized this profound respect for Northern soldiers and began incorporating the views of these men to bolster support for the Lincoln Administration. The message of the soldiers was twofold. First they believed that the end of the war was near. All that was needed was the unmitigated support of the Northern populace to push the war to a victorious conclusion, one which would be sanctified by the very blood of those who had fallen. And second, the Peace Democrats were outright disloyal to the nation. By advocating for a negotiated peace settlement the Copperheads threatened to nullify all that had been accomplished by those who had perished thus far; the Peace Democrats and the Democratic candidates were just as much the enemy as the Confederacy.

The Sentinel’s incorporation of anti-Democratic soldier’s views began as early as October 1863, as political tensions between the two parties escalated. “The soldiers who are fighting for the maintenance of a good government are almost unanimous in their expressions of contempt for the copperhead, who clamors for peace at home, for compromise with treason, and

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295 Hess, Liberty, Virtue, and Progress, 50.
296 Gallagher, The Union War, 3.
against prosecuting the war against rebellion,” claimed Thomas Hale. “Many of them, even, do not hesitate to express more disgust for this class of men than they do for the open rebel, who boldly and without disguise avows his treason and fights for it.” The newspaper then included an excerpt of a letter from a Keene soldier that “doubtless represents in its plain phraseology the general feeling that pervades the ranks.” Hale contended, “Those who are risking life and health to put down the rebellion feel more keenly than others the factious opposition made at home to the prosecution of the war.”

The Keene soldier writes,

What is the news in Keene? How goes the draft? Do the people resist it any? What do you think of the war and draft, and copperheads in general, and Southern Confederacy? Well perhaps you would like to know what I think of it as long as I am in the army. The war, we think, is most at a close. The Southern Confederacy is about played out. They have drafted and conscripted every man they can get, and borrowed the last dollar of England they can. Their bubble has burst, they have lost the end of the rope, and all their agents to England cannot reach it. They have struggled hard to keep above water, but down they will go sure. Now for the copperheads. Have you any in Keene? I hope not, for what are they? What are they doing? The South has lost all hope in England and are looking for help from traitors of the North. If the draft goes off well, the war is closed up. [Someone in Keene] sent me a Cheshire Republican. I see that [Cheshire Republican newspaper editor Horatio] Kimball goes for Vallindigham, the nominee for Governor of Ohio by the copperheads. If Horatio Kimball supports any such man as that, he is no better than Jefferson Davis, for Vallandigham is a rank secessionist in every sense of the word. I have seen him and heard him speak. These party men and peace democrats, as they call themselves, are played out. It is now Union or no Union. A man that is against the war is a traitor and should be branded as such.

By late summer of 1864, as the presidential election campaign grew closer amidst a sagging Northern morale, the New Hampshire Sentinel unleashed a scathing article bluntly titled

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297 NHS, 10/29/63.
298 Ibid.
the “Democratic Politicians vs. the Soldiers.” “The democratic politicians are boldly arraying themselves against the soldiers, who are imperiling health and life to save the country.” The *Sentinel* reported that at a recent vote in the New Hampshire House of Representatives on a bill that would allow soldiers in the field to vote in the upcoming Presidential and Congressional elections “the democratic members nearly all voted against it.” A similar measure was recently proposed in Pennsylvania where “the largest vote against it was uniformly in the strong democratic counties.” And while many Dems did vote for the bill, the majority of that party did not. Now, claimed the *Sentinel*, only the best of the Democrats supported the Republicans, “praying, laboring, and fighting for the Union and the Flag, against armed traitors” while “an inferior class of politicians” was doing its best to undermine the Lincoln Administration and, by doing so, aid the Confederacy. However, warned the *Sentinel*, “An honest, enlightened, and patriotic people will make a note of these things, and half a million of brave soldiers will not be likely to forget.”

In late September 1864, just over a month from the presidential election, a letter appeared in the *Sentinel* from a convalescing soldier in a Washington, D.C. hospital. Signed only as W.H.R., the veteran was infuriated by the recent Democratic National Convention in Chicago, particularly the Democratic contention that the “experiment of war” had failed, and it was now time to come to peaceful terms with the Confederacy. “Did treason ever find expression in more crafty and audacious language than that of the Chicago platform!” he cried. “Acknowledging our national unity to be the ‘foundation of our strength, security and happiness,’ [the Democratic platform] sneeringly declares the attempt to restore the Union by ‘the experiment of war’ to have resulted in failure.” In exasperation the soldier bemoaned that, as the Union military, “like a

299 *NHS*, 8/18/64.
hundred handed giant, is throttling the rebellion at Petersburg, Richmond, Atlanta, Charleston, and Mobile, the Chicago referee steps in and demands — *fair play* — Let the traitor up- give him a chance — is the cry of the peace party.” While the Democrats claimed to be faithful to the Union this soldier saw otherwise. “The hideous features of Disloyalty are ill-concealed by the mask they wear. The hands are the hands of one we know; the voice is that of Jefferson Davis.”

The soldier pleaded, “By all that we have lost in blood and treasure- by all that we have won in prestige and power- by the memory of the fallen – by the hope of the living, let us not give up the struggle at the decisive moment!” The war must be seen to its completion. “If the maintenance of our nationality is not to be accomplished by the ‘*experiment of war*’ what other will avail?” All attempts at compromise with Southerners had failed and now “war is the *experimentation cruces* which will prove the strength of our free government, and the folly of all who oppose it.” With a romantic flourish the soldier concluded that the Democratic nominee for president would be “doomed to meet with the fate of Phaeton when he undertook to drive the chariot of the sun…But no sisterly grief of fraternal sorrow will lament the fall.”

That same issue of the *Sentinel* included a letter to the editor from a New Hampshire soldier who directly addresses the ongoing political conflict and the Democratic presidential nominee George McClellan. “The soldiers are not going to give up [even] if there is so much opposition in the north,” the soldier claimed. “McClellan may be elected but ere he takes his seat ‘Old Abe’ will have crushed this rebellion, and southern traitors, and perhaps northern

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300 *NHS*, 9/29/64.
301 Ibid.
‘copperheads’ will be seeking homes in some foreign nation, and their worthy candidate well may follow or perhaps take the lead.”

Thomas Hale was not afraid to publicly hurl insults at his rival editor Horatio Kimball in the name of partisan politics, accusing him of, among other things, attempting to undermine the efforts of the soldiers, the ultimate act of disloyalty. He called the editor of the Democratic Cheshire Republican a “brainless fellow” and a “party puppet” who had “one talent, or rather instinct, for which he is likely to get due credit. He has a faculty for downright lying, which should put other imps to the blush.” In August 1864 Thomas Hale convicted Kimball of “devoting his time for the overthrow of President Lincoln’s Administration, and all the important measures for prosecuting the war, and the brave soldiers, struggling to save the existence of the government, receive his constant opposition. He seems to have no idea that there is anything to contend against or to fight but President Lincoln and his supporters.”

In September 1864 it was the soldiers themselves who gave new hope for the Republican campaign. News reached home that Gen. William T. Sherman had captured the Confederate stronghold of Atlanta, Georgia. One soldier admitted to the New Hampshire Sentinel that since the fall of Atlanta, Georgia, “thousands of soldiers…will now vote for ‘Old Abe’ – their faith in the Administration as competent to crush this rebellion and close the war, with bullets and bayonets, is increased five hundred percent.” Army morale was up thanks to recent success. “It would do you good could you hear the cheers given even while I am writing for ‘Grant,’ ‘Sherman’ and the ‘Administration.’ Imagine tens of thousands of throats expanded to their utmost in near continuous cheer along our front, only a stone’s throw from the enemy - the latter

302 Ibid.
303 NHS, 10/29/63.
304 NHS, 8/18/64.
are still as mice...Their cause is hopeless...Our army never was in better spirits and if Gen Grant should give the order they would again face the works of the enemy even to the cannon’s mouth.”

In Keene “Bells were rung and cannon fired...in honor of the splendid Union victory at Atlanta.” The Sentinel used the opportunity to again to stress the unity of Northerners both nationally and locally. The news of the Union victory in Atlanta “has been very generally rejoiced over throughout the loyal States,” adding a week later that “thanks for recent Union victories were rendered in most, if not all the Keene churches on Sunday last and prayers offered for continued success.” Indeed the capture of Atlanta was a major political victory for Lincoln supporters as it demonstrated that the war could be won under the president’s leadership.

“Loyal” Democrats

The September military success reinvigorated Republican hopes, setting the stage for the final phase of the presidential election. Thomas Hale again penned an editorial for his newspaper that emphasized the importance of faith in the war effort. “By the inevitable course of events, all intelligent men see that [the Confederacy] must yield, and the Union and Government of our fathers stand vindicated, their authority and power respected by bloody foes at home, and jealous enemies abroad...” Hale informed his readers in Keene that the “[loyal] masses now sympathize with the Administration of Abraham Lincoln, whom they will re-elect to the Presidency next November. These masses are now and have been the sustaining power of our army and navy –
they have had faith in the Government and the men who administer it.” Along with belief in Lincoln’s administration, the American people “have faith also in the military arm of government, notwithstanding the mistakes and blunders made, the weaknesses of betrayals of here, and there an officer, and the miscarriage of here and there a battle.” And finally the “masses have faith in their own indomitable, patriotic will.” Hale urged that due to the success of the federal government and the military, backed by “a kind Providence,” loyal Americans “feel an assurance of triumph which neither the croakings of weak men, nor the plotting s at Richmond or Chicago can weaken.\textsuperscript{309}

In early October the \textit{New Hampshire Sentinel} announced that “Lincoln Union Campaign Clubs are being extensively organized throughout the State.” The editor urged, “FRIENDS OF THE UNION, in OLD CHESHIRE! this has been, and we hope will continue to be, the banner county in the State, in the cause of Union and good Government.” As such he suggested that “the Union voters in all the towns in the county hold meetings for organizing ‘Lincoln Union Clubs’” by the following Saturday, which was one month from the November election. “We hope no time will be lost,” he continued, “as the issues now before the country are of transcendent magnitude. No true –hearted, loyal citizen will desire to live through this eventful period, without a consciousness of having faithfully performed his duty.” A meeting for all Keene voters who were “in favor of sustaining the National Administration and the War of the Union” was announced for Saturday evening October 8 at 7 o’clock at the Town Hall for the organization of Keene’s Lincoln Union Campaign Club.\textsuperscript{310}

\textsuperscript{309} \textit{NHS}, 9/29/64. Chicago refers to the site of the Democratic National Convention.

\textsuperscript{310} \textit{NHS}, 10/6/64.
During the 1864 presidential campaign the New Hampshire Sentinel also incorporated the views of “loyal democrats.” This tactic reflected a national political strategy of anti-partisanship. The main goal of the Union Party was to frame the election, not as one between Republicans and Democrats, but between those loyal to the nation and those who were not. By doing so the hope was to appeal to both core Republicans and Democrats who supported the war effort. Since party allegiances were fluid, inclusion of testimonials of Democrats who supported Lincoln was aimed at encouraging other Democrats to do the same. These marginal voters were often crucial in determining election outcomes.

In September 1864 the Sentinel printed an editorial titled “A Democratic Editor on the Situation.” The piece, penned by the editor of the Democratic newspaper the Boston Daily Herald, and originally printed in that paper, criticized the Democratic presidential platform, as well as its nominees. “So far as the platform, the speeches and candidates are concerned, the Convention held in Chicago might as well have been held in Richmond,” claimed the editor. “It was as a miserable, fawning sycophantic and degrading surrender to the men who are in arms against the Government and who have done their utmost to destroy American liberty.” The Boston newsman tried to distance himself from these fellow Democrats who condoned the 1864 platform. “For ourselves we support no such doctrines and no such ticket as that made and put forth at Chicago, and which we believe will be repudiated at the polls.”

In October the New Hampshire Sentinel exclaimed there was a “Significant Sign” regarding the upcoming election. The number of Democrats “earnestly supporting President Lincoln” was now “numbered by hundreds and thousands.” And among them were many

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311 NHS, 9/29/64.
prominent politicians. Francis Cutting, former Democratic Congressman who had been offered the vice presidency ticket under McClellan but declined now publicly “repudiates the treasonous proceedings at Chicago” and announced his endorsement of Lincoln. Democratic proponent M.H. Finch had supported McClellan “until he read the copperhead platform.” And former Democratic Senator Andrew McReynolds, a three year veteran officer of the 1st New York Cavalry and “always a warm personal and political friend of McClellan, discards him now for his associations and principles, and takes the stump for Lincoln and Johnson.” After listing 16 names of well-known Democrats now supporting Lincoln the Sentinel professed that they could continue with the list but had “given enough to show the character of the whole” as well as the “good influences that are working to sustain the Administration of President Lincoln and the honor and integrity of the Union.”

On Thursday October 27, 1864, a large Republican (Union) Rally was held at Keene’s Town Hall, at what was perhaps the culmination of the 1864 presidential campaign. Thomas Hale was in attendance that evening. What is interesting to note is that his coverage in the following issue of his newspaper focused extensively on the speech of Walter Harriman, a former State Senator of New Hampshire, currently a Civil War officer, and perhaps most significantly, a Democrat. Harriman was the physical embodiment of the New Hampshire Sentinel’s presidential campaign strategy: a “loyal” Democratic soldier. (Illustration 6-1)

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312 NHS, 10/12/64.
Hale claimed that Harriman “came here for no partisan purpose, but for the cause of his imperiled country, in whose service his life was devoted.” Harriman explained to the crowd that the Democratic Party had always “stood by the flag of the country, especially in the time of war.” Since 1840 Harriman had voted consistently for the Democrat presidential nominee, including casting his ballot for Stephen Douglas in 1860. He asserted that he was “at this hour the same democrat he ever was.” By “sustaining the Government and flag of his country through the [Lincoln] Administration into whose hands they had been constitutionally placed, at a time of peril and danger to that Government and flag, he but carried out the old democratic principle of former days, and in continuing to carry out that principle he should vote for Abraham Lincoln.” He “closed with an elegant appeal especially to his old democratic associates, to stand by the Old Flag, in whatever hand it may be borne.”

313 NHS, 11/3/64.
The rally ended with Republican Congressman James Patterson, whose two-hour oration also received extensive coverage in the *Sentinel*. Patterson again reiterated the Republican vision for the nation and supported his argument with historical facts. As other advocates had done, he framed the secession of states as unnecessary and a direct affront to the Constitution. For those who asserted it was the states that held ultimate power Patterson argued that “in discussing the nature and the principles of our Constitution and the history of its formation it was clearly shown that complete supremacy over the States was expressly given it in all matters pertaining to the execution of its authority and the laws passed under it.” Toward the end of his appeal Patterson fully endorsed the expansive powers of the federal government and praised the “heroic” job being done by Abraham Lincoln who “had backbone from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet.” He also condemned those who opposed the new federal measures through “dastardly, cowardly attempts to cripple the arm of the Government by efforts to alarm the people by cries of draft – draft draft! taxes – taxes- taxes!” However, assured Patterson, in the upcoming election “the intelligence and patriotism of the loyal masses had proved and would prove too much for such false and disloyal practices.”

On Election Day, November 8, 1864, the voters of Keene cast their ballots overwhelmingly in favor of Abraham Lincoln. In the final tally 652 votes went for Lincoln and 317 for McClellan. A decisive 67% of Keene voters pledged their support for the Republican administration, almost same proportion as the 1860 presidential election. Thomas Hale and the writers of the *Sentinel* took it as a vindication of the righteousness of their cause as well as a

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314 NHS, 11/3/64.
315 NHS, 11/10/64.
316 Griffin, *History of Keene*, 468. Voter results of Keene in 1860 were 635 votes for Lincoln, 224 for Douglas, 31 for Breckenridge, 5 for Bell.
damning of disloyal Democratic principles. They proclaimed in bold headlines “Union Triumph Complete – Copperheadism Crushed to Atoms.” He then gleefully recalled the warnings of a “prominent copperhead” Keene politician who claimed that if Lincoln won the 1864 election the “blood would flow in our streets.” Hale was now happy to report that “the election has passed off very quietly, neither blood runs, nor do copperheads clamor in our streets. All is quiet and calm. The loyal public breathes freer, and the public heart beats stronger with the hope of a more speedy restoration of the Union, and the return of peace and prosperity.”

Hale then expanded his thread of unity in regional terms. “New England goes in unbroken column for Lincoln and the Union,” he declared, “Massachusetts giving 75,000, and Boston over 5000 majority on the right side.”

The newspaper also included several examples of Lincoln’s victory as an upholding of the ideals of the generation of the Revolution. The first issue after the election the paper published a lengthy poem by William Cullen Bryant title “Not Yet.” The ode included the following relevant passages:

And they who founded, in our land
The power that rules from sea to sea
Bled they in vain, or vainly planned
To leave their country great and free?
    Their sleeping ashes from below
Send up the thrilling murmur, No!  

317 NHS, 11/10/64.
318 Ibid.
On November 10, two days after the election a correspondent from Vermont wrote a letter to Thomas Hale, which he immediately published in the *Sentinel*. Regarding the vote the Vermonter wrote, “I trust the freemen of the Old Granite State have vindicated its Revolutionary history and spurned the traitors.”

Another connection came through mentions of several centenarians. Eldad Granger, a resident of Westmoreland, NH who “voted for George Washington, the first president of this republic,” and “on the 8th of November, instant, he cast his vote for Abraham Lincoln.”

Deacon John Phillips of Massachusetts, age 104, cast his vote for Lincoln. In Pennsylvania Seth Marvin, the “oldest voter in the country” at 105 also voted for the Union ticket. It was noted that Marvin was a veteran of the American Revolution and had fought at the Battle of Monmouth.

And two months later the *Sentinel* made mention of a Samuel Downing of Saratoga, New York, “one of the few surviving revolutionary patriots,” who, at almost 103 years of age, had cast his vote for Abraham Lincoln. It seems the writers of the *Sentinel* wanted to portray Abraham Lincoln, and by turn his actions as president, as the man most suited to carry on the legacy of the nation’s founding generation.

After three and a half years of constructing a new, wartime nationalism through hard-fought military and political battles, Thomas Hale saw Lincoln’s re-election as nothing less than the redemption of all that had been gained so far, and the *New Hampshire Sentinel* would continue to rally support for the Republican Party throughout the remaining months of the war.

In November 1864 Thomas Hale predicted, “As the election of George B. McClellan would have put our nationality in extremist peril…the re-election of Abraham Lincoln saved that nationality,

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319 Letter of W. to Thomas Hale 11/10/64, published in *NHS* 11/17/64.
320 *NHS*, 11/17/64.
321 *NHS*, 12/1/64.
and put us on the sure road to final victory.”322 Hale’s words were prescient. Just over a month later, in late December 1864, William T. Sherman captured Savannah, Georgia, opening the way for the invasion of South Carolina. And while Confederate forces around Richmond and Petersburg continued to resist, and scattered rebel forces to the west remained in the field, by 1865 the days of the Confederacy were numbered.

**Victory and Loss**

At noon on April 3, 1865, the Keene telegraph office received word that Richmond and Petersburg had fallen to Union troops, and the people of the town erupted in elation. One witness described that “during the afternoon and evening our streets resounded with joyful noises. One hundred guns were fired in honor of the event, flags were displayed, drums beat, bonfires were kindled, and the din of jubilation was kept up till midnight.”323 The following week the news of Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox fueled an even greater celebration. But on that Friday April 14, 1865, as the town was rejoicing over the Union victory, President Abraham Lincoln was killed by an assassin in Washington, D.C.

The outpouring of grief following Abraham Lincoln’s assassination represents a defining moment in the construction of wartime nationalism. To millions of Americans, Lincoln had become the physical embodiment of the values of Union for which so many had sacrificed to uphold. Coming so soon after word of victory, his sudden death left the people of Keene in utter shock. Thomas Hale reported that “the entire community appears deeply afflicted by the

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322 *NHS*, 11/17/64.
323 *NHS*, 4/6/65.
calamity that has befallen the nation.” Writing to his mother just two days after the assassination, Unitarian minister William White captured the terrible sense of anguish that had consumed the town of Keene, New Hampshire. “Since I wrote you how much trouble we have lived through!” he began. “These glorious victories, succeeded by the deep national sorrow, have kept our hearts in alternate tumult of exultation and agony.” He called the day of Lincoln’s death “one of the darkest days in my life, and I doubt not you can say in yours…More tears were shed that day, I believe, than were ever shed on this planet, in any one day before.” While walking through town Rev. White called to one man working in his yard, “We are all mourners,” to which the man replied “Yes, yes,” in “a most pathetic tone.” Another Keene man, who had previously lost his own children to death, told the minister, “I’ve seen trouble, but nothing ever came to me so cutting as this.” And the man had told this to White, “forty eight hours after hearing the news [of Lincoln’s death], and with [still] weeping eyes.”

Lincoln’s death brought the country together in grief. Young and old, black and white, and even Republicans and Democrats came together in a simultaneous tribute to the fallen leader. On April 19, 1865, Democratic editor of Keene’s Cheshire Republican, and longtime critic of the president, wrote, “Words do not avail to express the grief all must feel at this act, which deprives the Nation of its Constitutional head, and places the affairs of State in untried and uncertain hands. For one we consider the loss of President Lincoln at the time a great calamity, and the barbarous manner of his death appears the more aggravated the more it is considered.”

The pain of the president’s death was felt across the nation, and signs of mourning could be seen even in the remotest of places. Riding on horseback from Keene the weekend of the
assassination William White reported hearing the bells of Winchester, New Hampshire tolling twelve miles in the distance. And White was very much affected by the sight of a “wee little house” in the New Hampshire countryside dressed in black followed by “another in similar grief, an eighth of a mile off.”

In Keene, New Hampshire it was once again it was towns’ local religious institutions that provided a sense of comfort in this national tragedy. Local churches provided a framework that united the country throughout the Northern states. On April 17, 1865, in a directive from the federal government to its citizens, the State Department announced that the funeral of Abraham Lincoln would take place at the White House on Wednesday April 19 at precisely 12 o’clock. It was suggested that “the various religious denominations throughout the country…meet in their respective places of worship at that hour for the purpose of solemnizing the occasion with appropriate ceremonies.” In Keene on the appointed day “services were held in all the churches, places of business were generally closed, and together with many private dwellings were draped in mourning. Minute guns were fired and bells tolled.” Rev. William White reported that all of the town’s churches were draped in black in respect to the fallen president and that “our five Protestant churches were all filled on the funeral occasion.”

Through death, Lincoln transcended his role as the Union’s wartime leader, and instead his memory took on a more profound importance in the American conscience. In his discussion of the distinctiveness of American nationalism Peter Parish claims that, along with George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, the martyrdom of Lincoln completed Americans’ “secular

328 *NHS*, 4/20/65.
329 Ibid.
trinity of household gods.” Similarly Melinda Lawson states that in the wake of his death many Northerners now “placed [Lincoln] in the tradition of the Founding Fathers.”

As we have seen, the people of Keene, New Hampshire had a sacred respect for their Revolutionary past and had seen themselves as heirs to that legacy. Given this profound reverence it makes sense that Lincoln’s tragic death would evoke ties to the past. Following his assassination, Editor Thomas Hale made efforts to associate Lincoln with the nation’s first president. A small piece appeared in the Sentinel titled “WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN” that attempted to connect both Washington and Lincoln through local association. Hale explained that “five persons attended the funeral of [Abraham Lincoln] …at Dr. Barstow’s [Congregational] Church in this town on Wednesday of last week who [also] attended the funeral services held in the same church, or under the same roof-frame, on the occasion of the death of George Washington in 1799.” And two days after the president’s death, Keene Unitarian minister William White explained to his mother that Lincoln “is my favorite of all our American statesmen,” even more so than Washington. His “humor and his plain talk are elements in him which” made him so endearing and that Lincoln’s “style was inimitable.” Since White had never seen Lincoln in person, his familiar description of Lincoln’s personality illustrates the power of the press to create such a personal, human bond between the people and their president.

As Melinda Lawson explains, Lincoln’s death, “which personified for Americans the sacrifices of all the martyred soldiers, supplied the nation with a much needed emotional cement.” Rev. William White exclaimed, “How like a rocket at the zenith of his fame he has

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331 Parish, The North and the Nation, 62.
332 Lawson, Patriot Fires, 173.
333 NHS, 4/27/65.
334 White, William Orne White. 174-5.
335 Lawson, Patriot Fires, 173.
gone up!” Thomas Hale saw Lincoln’s assassination as a crystallizing event, one that would provide resolve and purpose to the act of healing the country. Now that “the flag of our fathers waves in triumph” and reconstruction had begun “the northern people will be all the more united, and will see all the more clearly their duty in the great work before them.”

Abraham Lincoln’s death provided another economic opportunity for wartime commercialism. As the nation collectively mourned for their fallen leader, the citizens of Keene were given the opportunity to locally purchase Lincoln’s image to display in their homes. Immediately following the president’s death Spalter’s Book Store in downtown Keene placed an advertisement in the Sentinel which read “LINCOLN fine steel engravings” available in four sizes. The local store also offered a selection of lithographs and photographs “of our late PRESIDENT.” And, as Keene’s merchants had done earlier in the war, Spalter’s Book Store urged purchase of these items as an almost patriotic duty and explained that an image of Lincoln belonged in every family home “as a remembrance of one of the purest and best of men that ever lived.” Images were also soon available at Tildén’s Store in town.

And remarkably Lincoln’s image was not the only one people should own. The newspaper ads urged Keene families to purchase pictures of John Wilkes Booth(!), which could be obtained in town at the French & Sawyer Photographic Studio. The newspaper claimed that “it is well to have the picture of the rascal in all households, that he may be known and recognized by all men, and his name be carried down to the latest posterity in infamy.”

337 *NHS*, 4/20/65.
The demand for photographs appears to be so large that in late May a Boston merchant took out a large ad in the *New Hampshire Sentinel* that promised “Choice Photographs. The Best published of the late President Lincoln.” In addition to the president there were images available of Mrs. Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, William Seward, and “J. Wilkes Booth (the assassin).” Also for sale, the same ad announced, were pictures of some of the most prominent heroes of the Union: Generals Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, Thomas, Hancock, Howard, Warren, and Butler. The merchant, who claimed to have “the finest assortment in New England,” was selling the photograph for ten cents each.\(^{341}\)

**Chapter Conclusion**

The newspaper was a powerful force in building nationalism, and the *New Hampshire Sentinel*’s actions during this last stage of the war reflect that vital role. Throughout the crucial election year of 1864 the paper played a pivotal part in garnering support for the Lincoln Campaign. Echoing the national campaign themes of the Union Party, which stressed anti-partisanship, Editor Thomas Hale’s newspaper helped define the upcoming election as one of loyalty to the nation. Also, by continuing its ardent and unquestioning support of the federal government’s policies the paper helped foster a sense of trust between the people of Keene and an expansive federal government. And finally, the paper fostered a personal and even emotional connection between the people of Keene and Abraham Lincoln, which in a sense humanized the federal government. This emotional attachment to the president was clear in the wake of his tragic death.

\(^{341}\) *NHS*, 5/25/65.
Conclusion

When the Civil War began in April 1861, the people of Keene, New Hampshire, were prepared to meet the challenges of the conflict. Despite the lack of significant wartime experience, the citizens of the community utilized existing institutions, practices, and traditions to both mobilize for and sustain the war effort. The people of the town were able to demonstrate their allegiance to both local and national interests. And while most often loyalty to the nation was displayed through local activities and associations, the people of this New Hampshire community were driven by age-old sacred concepts such as the Constitution, the Union, and the legacy of the Revolution - national ideals that provided an integral common tie between people of the Northern states during the war.

One of the most vital keys to success was the ability to organize. Like most mid-nineteenth century Americans, the people of Keene had a long tradition of forming associations to achieve specific goals. When faced with the unprecedented crisis of civil war, this well-practiced ability to come together for a purpose was adapted to support the war effort. On the local level, organizations were vital to recruitment and relief efforts. Public rallies and holiday celebrations helped foster solidarity and purpose. The formation of local wartime relief associations was aided by years of experience in prewar benevolence work. These local wartime organizations often linked in with national organizations creating a direct connection between the town and people across the nation.

Keene’s civic and commercial institutions served as effective support systems for wartime activities. The Town Hall was the meeting place for a variety of functions; the large
brick building on Central Square, with its spacious auditorium, housed war meetings, political rallies, holiday celebrations, fundraisers, public lectures, and other entertainments, all connecting the local populace to the broader national cause. The Keene Fire Department served as a stabilizing force on the home front during the four long years of war. Annual events such as The Cheshire County Agricultural Fair, the Cheshire County Music Institute’s annual Music Convention proved to be an effective way to raise money for relief efforts and to foster a sense of patriotic nationalism. Despite initial hesitancy about the appropriateness of holding these celebrations during war, the people soon found that these traditional events could, in fact, help aid the war effort, demonstrating the flexibility of these institutions as well as the ability to meld local and national interests.

Keene’s religious institutions played a vital role in the war. Church leaders used their pulpits to spur on support for the Union war effort. To many Americans the Civil War was undergirded with a profound spiritual purpose, and Keene’s church leaders helped articulate and reinforce the concept of the war as crusade to save the greatest form of government in world history. Often invoking the concept of Providence, they urged parishioners to have confidence in the righteousness of the cause and faith in a successful outcome. Churches held the funerals of local men who died in the service. Eulogies spoken from church altars helped frame each death as a sacrifice for preserving the Union. Thus, by defining these losses as profoundly purposeful, these men, in a sense, transcended death itself to live on in the spirit of a sustained republic. Each local death strengthened the bond between the townspeople and the concept of national Union.

Along with spiritual support, the churches served an equally important function as the logistical backbone of relief efforts. Prewar experience with church benevolence groups proved
invaluable to wartime relief efforts. The first meetings of the Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society were held in the basement of the Congregational church, and the organization of that body was structured around women representatives from each of Keene’s churches. With the coordination of local newspapers and the CCSAS, the churches proved a highly effective conduit for raising money and supplies in a fast and extremely efficient manner.

The Civil War called on the services of women to support the cause. Drawing on longstanding traditions of voluntarism and benevolent organizing the women of Keene quickly and efficiently adapted to meet the needs of the war. As men enlisted in the army or performed other war-related duties, women focused their energies on supporting the war through relief work. The Cheshire County Soldiers’ Aid Society, based in Keene and directed by women, was the primary local source of relief for the war effort. Through this service, the women of Keene became active participants in the war itself, allowing them to demonstrate their own sense of political loyalty to the government. They became personally invested in upholding the ideals of the American past as well as guaranteeing the future preservation of the Union. The women of Keene demonstrated their allegiance both locally and nationally throughout the war. And this balance between local and national sense of duty continued even after the war ended. Between 1865 and 1871 the women of the Cheshire County Soldier’s Aid Society devoted much of their efforts to helping local families who had lost loved ones in the war. And before officially disbanding in 1871 the women again responded to the needs of fellow citizens afar by sending aid to victims of the Great Chicago Fire.¹

¹ Griffin, History of Keene, 473. The Ladies’ Charitable Society of Keene, which has been in existence since 1815, still operates today, according to their mission statement, “as a women’s organization that quietly helps to provide for the basic needs of local individuals while maintaining their dignity in an environment of confidentiality.”
Keene’s numerous commercial establishments also adapted to wartime circumstances. As the army had become synonymous with the preservation of the Union, these military-themed products, advertisements, and entertainments were instilled with a strong sense of patriotism. This “commercial nationalism” helped connect Keene residents with millions of Americans who had also sent community members off to war.

Keene’s Republican newspaper The New Hampshire Sentinel played an extremely important role in building wartime nationalism. The weekly publication served as a channel for information including local, national, and international news, as well as the latest military updates. It served as a repository for a diverse array of sources including soldiers’ letters, government bulletins, political addresses, editorials, and advertisements. And as the town’s Republican newspaper, the New Hampshire Sentinel played an integral role in maintaining support for the Lincoln Administration throughout the war. The paper never questioned the efficacy, legality, or appropriateness of any of the United States government wartime policies. Instead, they went to great measures to convince the people of Keene that the measures were both wise and necessary to prosecute the war, helping to build public confidence in the actions of the federal government. Emancipation, conscription, and federal financial measures all received the Sentinel’s wholehearted and unwavering support and approval. The writers continued to stress the urgency of the times, portraying Democratic opposition to federal policies as utter disloyalty to the nation.

One continual trend that emerged was Editor Thomas Hale’s efforts to connect these expansive federal policies to Abraham Lincoln himself. By consistently enforcing the belief of Lincoln’s honesty, patriotism, and courage, Hale helped create a sense of personal connection between the president and the American people, which in a sense “humanized” the federal
government. In an age when the American public rarely, if ever, saw their president in the flesh, the man they came to know was the one depicted in the pages of the *Sentinel*. It was perhaps largely because of the personal connection that the *Sentinel* fostered that made Lincoln’s death resonate so deeply among the citizens of Keene. Through Hale’s own tributes and eulogies and from newspapers across the country, the paper helped the community grieve for their president along with millions of their fellow countrymen and women. The *Sentinel* also used Lincoln’s death to reinvigorate the nationalist spirit, to rally support behind reuniting the country and moving forward.

When the Civil War began the people of Keene already had a strong sense of regional identity. As New Englanders with a long, distinct history of their own, they had already perceived themselves in a way that transcended mere state affiliation. This New England identity, based on tradition and heritage, was further strengthened through familial, fraternal, religious, and business ties between Keene and residents of adjoining states. The Civil War enhanced these connections as Keene men enlisted in regiments outside the state of New Hampshire and vice versa. Relief efforts, initially directed toward the state capital of Concord, were quickly diverted to Boston as New England became a single regional branch of the US Sanitary Commission. The people of Keene, as New Englanders, were inherently familiar with looking beyond simple state affiliation. It was perhaps this regional identity that facilitated an easy sense of expanding allegiance from state to national identity during the war. In addition, New Englanders also felt a sense of paternal obligation regarding Northern nationalism, as they viewed the rest of the nation as a reflection of New England itself. And this sense of New England nationalism was emboldened by the war. In a Memorial Day speech delivered at Keene in 1884, Oliver Wendell Holmes makes it clear that sentiments of New
England’s Puritan legacy and its Revolutionary roots remained alive even well after the Civil War. As he reflected on the nation’s bloodiest conflict Holmes declared boldly,

The men, not less, perhaps even more, characteristic of New England, were the Puritans of our day. For the Puritan still lives in New England, thank God! and will live there so long as New England lives and keeps her old renown. New England is not dead yet. She still is mother of a race of conquerors--stern men, little given to the expression of their feelings, sometimes careless of their graces, but fertile, tenacious, and knowing only duty. Each of you, as I do, thinks of a hundred such that he has known. I see one--grandson of a hard rider of the Revolution and bearer of his historic name--who was with us at Fair Oaks, and afterwards for five days and nights in front of the enemy. The only sleep that he would take was what he could snatch sitting erect in his uniform and resting his back against a hut. He (Col. Paul Revere) fell at Gettysburg.

The final element to Keene’s construction of Civil War nationalism was that of remembrance. In 1868 the town officials approved $2000 for the erection of a Civil War monument, followed by an additional appropriation of $5000 in 1870. The spot chosen in Central Square was significant, as it was the exact location of the podium erected in April 1861 for the town’s first war rally, as well the ground where Keene citizens assembled in April 1775 after Lexington and Concord. (Illustration C-1)
The monument’s construction and dedication again represent a balance of local and regional collaborative efforts, which ultimately commemorate the national victory. The massive granite base was designed by a committee of Keene residents and cut by local stone mason Charles Barnes. The eight foot bronze statue of a soldier, cast at the Ames Manufacturing Company of Chicopee, Massachusetts, was designed by famed New England artist Milton Milmore, who would shortly thereafter create the Soldiers and Sailors Monument that stands on Boston Common. Rather than a specific individual, the soldier represented all of Keene’s men who served in the Civil War. The statue was in fact an identical copy of one that had been erected on the town green in Woburn, Massachusetts in 1869.²

On October 20, 1871, an estimated 7000 people crowded the town square for the dedication of Keene’s Civil War monument. The crowd was a mix of local, regional, and national figures, including New Hampshire governor James Weston along with “units of the local GAR, companies from neighboring communities, Keene firemen, civic bodies, the Keene Brass Band, and the Keene Light Infantry.” Famed Civil War generals James Garfield and Judson Kilpatrick also attended, and the latter presented the principal address to the large assembled crowd.

Inscribed on the base of Keene’s monument are two lines. “Keene will cherish in perpetual honor the memory of her sons who fought for liberty and the integrity of the republic 1861-1865. The honor of the heroic dead is the inspiration for posterity.” The words inscribed upon the monument succinctly define the meaning of the war and reflect the reverence for the local men who fought to uphold those ideals. The words also declare permanence to Keene’s place in the national construct, and that through “perpetual honor” future generations of Keene citizens would continue to acknowledge the community’s local contribution to the larger national narrative.

A New Nation

In June 1864 the New Hampshire Sentinel announced that “A lithograph copy of the President’s Emancipation Proclamation hangs in the front part of the Post Office. It is from the design of a lad, 14 years of age, residing in California, and is a work of rare merit.”3 The print was created by F.S. Butler, a young boy from California, and mass produced by San Francisco publisher L. Nagel.

3 NHS, 6/23/64.
In many ways this small incident perfectly illustrates the subtle changes the war had brought about in Keene. The lithograph was fittingly displayed at the Keene Post Office, which for so long had been the only tangible connection to the federal government for residents of the town. The image was mass produced and disseminated across the country which, like other forms of print media, created a common tie between disparate communities throughout the North. Announced and lauded by a local newspaper, the lithograph itself was essentially the text of Lincoln’s historic measure, which had altered the meaning of the war. The only graphics were that of an American flag flying on a staff, again framing the proclamation as a significant thread of a changing nationalism. Near the bottom, the words “Almighty God” stood out in bold lettering, emphasizing the sacred nature of the text. And finally, it was significant that the creator was a boy of 14 years of age, as he represented the future of America, a new generation which would grow up in a country that no longer sanctioned the institution of slavery.

Illustration C-2
Illustration C-2: 1864 Lithograph of Emancipation Proclamation

In the years following the Civil War how did the people of Keene express their sense of nationalism? What impact did the war have? To begin, Keene, at least publicly, saw the eradication of slavery as an integral part of the victory to preserve the Union, but not the central one. This is not surprising given the community’s history with the abolition movement. In
1834, when the New Hampshire Antislavery Society was formed, Keene was not a member and would never join.\textsuperscript{4} As the debate over slavery grew during the antebellum period, Keene remained conservative in their views. In 1840 the Congregational Church officially declared “that it is morally wrong to claim property in man, or to make merchandise of human flesh.” However, Rev. Barstow, head of Keene’s Congregational Church and leading moral figure, opposed radical abolitionism, fearing it would be disruptive to the church.\textsuperscript{5} In the decade before the Civil War the issue of slavery was briefly discussed in the Keene Debating Club, and prominent abolitionists visited the town to present lectures on the topic. But the community never took any formal collective action. Despite the extraordinary amount and diversity of local organizations there were no Keene-based or regional-affiliated associations formed to combat slavery. The same was true of Keene’s postwar years, which saw no collective action to support federal programs of Reconstruction such as the Freedmen’s Bureau. It appears that for the most part Keene saw the Civil War, as Gary Gallagher has termed it, as a “Union War.”

The Civil War was certainly transformative in some ways. Its most profound impact was, as Melinda Lawson has explained, that it changed the relationship between the individual and the nation state. The people of Keene were quick to perceive the necessity of strong central authority. The scale of the conflict required the people of the community to put increasingly more trust into the federal government to successfully coordinate and prosecute the war. This new perception of central authority would set a precedent for the rapidly expanding federal powers in the decades to come. The second way the war influenced nationalism was the close ties formed with the military. In 1861, the United States Army consisted of 15,000 soldiers

\textsuperscript{4} Salerno, “Defending the Nation,” 124.
\textsuperscript{5} Proper, \textit{History of the First Congregations Church}, 93.
mostly stationed in the West. The generation of that time had no major experience with the struggles of war. By 1865 the people of Keene had not only faced incredible hardships and sacrifice, but had come to be closely connected with the military through relief efforts and support. In four years nearly two million men served in the Northern army. Following the Civil War the people of the community would have ever-present reminders of the military in their community. In the 1870s, in addition to the erection of the town’s Civil War monument, local Civil War veterans formed a branch of the Grand Army of the Republic. These veterans would be a visible and active presence at civic celebrations, parades, and memorials for decades to come.

While the Civil War helped shape Keene’s view of nationalism, it did not define it. In fact, as early as the 1870s the Civil War was not even central to the town’s view of nationalism, the overriding theme of which had remained the same as always. The Founding Fathers had established the country with a unique set of democratic principles and values, which had allowed for the freedoms and successes so far enjoyed. These sacred principles, embodied in the Constitution, were handed down from generation to generation. The Civil War had threatened to destroy the nation, and that generation had saved the Union so that the nation would survive. The people of Keene retained an almost sacred respect for the past and held great hope for continuing progress in the future. They saw their country as an ongoing, unfolding process in which each generation had an obligation to take an active part. To understand this view we may look at two of Keene’s largest community celebrations following the war: The 1876 United States Centennial and the town’s 1903 Sesquicentennial.

To celebrate the nation’s centennial in 1876 Keene’s town government asked Rev. William Orne White to write and deliver the main address. White immediately emphasized the
concept of time, claiming, “We stretch one hand to the shadowy forms of the past, and the other to the shadowy forms of the future, content to be, today, only a connecting link between the two.” He then used the metaphor of a coral reef to describe the relationship of each American village and town to the United States as a whole. The reef, which stretched a thousand miles was “the combined work of innumerable thousands of myriads of microscopic creatures, each one of which has performed the indispensable part of this marvelous architecture.” Thus, “each contribution, however humble, to the history of any village in the land, is so much added to the historic reef” known as the United States.

The oration echoed many of the themes of various speeches the people of Keene had heard during the war. White related the long history of the community, exploring its colonial beginnings and its strong regional ties. He described the town’s role in the American Revolution, taking great care to make local connections to the War for Independence. He explained how local resident William Briggs remembers how his grandfather, a Revolutionary War veteran, would “tell the story of Bunker Hill over and over again to the children” of Keene. White pointed out a local barn that had been built on the same day as the Battle of Bunker Hill, claiming “there, then, is our monument to the battle.”

White then recounts in great detail the rapid growth of the town throughout the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the evolution of churches, schools, associations, industry, and transportation. After acknowledging the town’s efforts during the Civil War White then turned the crowd’s attention to the large statue of the Civil War soldier

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6 William Orne White, Historical Address Delivered to the Town of Keene, NH on July 4, 1876. (Keene, NH: Sentinel Printing Office, 1876), 5.
7 Ibid., 6.
8 Ibid., 12.
atop the town monument. “There he stands in brazen panoply of armor!” White viewed the 
figure as a time traveler, a messenger to future generations. He saw “in his meditative 
attitude…not wholly of the storm cloud of battle, nor of freedom dawning upon millions of a 
once enslaved race” but “he seems to dream of brighter days for his country.” He fervently 
hoped that in the future “God grant that those silent lips may speak eloquently to the future 
dwellers in this happy valley, of those sons of Keene, who in behalf of their country, presented 
‘their bodies a living sacrifice.’”

At the end of the speech, White once again made reference to the past before concluding 
with hope for the future. He acknowledged the “living hosts of the past, gathered invisibly with 
us today” who had broken ground of the frontier, survived the horrors of Indian raids, “were 
summoned to the field by the Revolutionary tocsin, or who flew to your Country’s defense in the 
War of the Rebellion.” He prayed that “we may enter upon a new century determined to hold all 
who fill offices of honor and trust in the nation to rigid accountability, yet at the same time 
cherishing fresh faith in the expanding destinies of the Republic!” He then spoke directly to the 
audience who would attend the nation’s bicentennial, saying “We extend a warm hand to you 
across the arches of the coming century! We pledge ourselves, God willing, to be with you “in 
spirit.’”

In 1903 Keene chose to celebrate the community’s sesquicentennial on July 4 so as to 
coincide with Independence Day festivities. It turned out to be the largest and most elaborate 
celebration in the town’s history, with an estimated 20,000 people in attendance. The Fourth of 
July Parade featured an array of prominent citizens, including members of the Grand Army of
the Republic, as well as numerous civic and fraternal groups from neighboring towns in New Hampshire and Vermont. As had been the case in wartime gatherings, numerous traditional patriotic songs were performed, this time with the addition of the “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp” and “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” demonstrating how the Civil War had become another strand in the fabric of nationalism.\(^\text{11}\) During the dedication address, when Keene’s military history was recounted, the Civil War received no inordinate amount of attention, but was listed along with all of the major wars in which Keene men served, including the recent Spanish American War.\(^\text{12}\)

The 1903 event was not meant to simply commemorate the past. Instead, like the 1876 Centennial, the main theme was to connect the past with the future, depicting the story of the community and the nation as an unfolding and unfinished one. To this end, there was a deliberate effort to involve Keene’s young children in the festivities. School children marched in the parade and later performed a series of songs in concert. The highlight of the day’s celebration was a “living” American flag, 72’ long and 25’ wide, comprised of 350 schoolchildren dressed in red, white, and blue. While arrayed the children sang “To Thee, O Country” and “Praise the Father.”\(^\text{13}\)

The dedication address was delivered prominent Keene resident Rev. Josiah Seward. Like White had done in 1876, Seward words emphasized the integral bond between past and future. And, as had been done so many times in the past, Seward looked to words from the Bible to articulate the message of the day.

\(^{11}\)Griffin, *History of Keene*, 714.
\(^{12}\)Ibid., 728-9.
\(^{13}\)Ibid., 714-15.
My tongue, by inspiration taught
    Shall parables unfold
Dark oracles, but understand
And owned for truths of old
Which we from sacred registers
Of ancient times have known,
And our forefathers’ pious care
    To us has handed down.
Let children learn the mighty deeds
Which God performed of old,
Which, in our younger years we saw,
    And which our fathers told.
Our lips shall tell them to our sons,
    And they again to theirs,
That generations yet unborn
May teach them to their heirs.\textsuperscript{14}

The people of Keene saw it as imperative to continually keep the past alive in the minds and hearts of the living. Each generation had a duty to uphold the legacy of their ancestors. Perhaps they saw the truth in the idea that should the nation fail to grow and evolve, should the people fail to continue to fulfill the ideals of the Founding Fathers, then the achievements of the Civil War, as well as all of the other struggles the country had faced, could still be lost.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 717.
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