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The Civil War Draft in Palmer: Reaction in a Small Town

By

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During the colonial era of American history, a militia system was used to supply the needed men for combat. These were citizens who were only called upon when they were needed; a standing army did not exist. The militia system was phased out for a volunteer system throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. This system, however, had its flaws as well due largely to the fact that it was difficult to secure volunteers.

The Civil War was the first time that the United States ever had to use a military draft in order to keep enough soldiers in the field. Conscription, by its nature, was not a popular concept. No citizen of a democratic nation liked the idea of the government forcing him to do anything. In this case, the government was asking citizens to put their lives on the line. In some cases, conscription caused protests, riots, and other types of demonstrations to take place. Although major events, such as the New York City draft riots of July 1863, are very well known, smaller forms of political protest occurred throughout the Union as well. The small town of Palmer, Massachusetts is a prime example of the attitudes of many northerners during the initial draft.

When war began in 1861, many men were willing to volunteer their services to their nation. The initial enlisting of volunteers secured 700,000 recruits; so many that Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton ordered recruiting offices closed. At this time, no one in the government could have foreseen the need for a draft two years later. By the early part of 1863, it became apparent that large numbers of men would soon be needed to replace those who were scheduled to be

completing their terms of service by midyear. Men who had enlisted for two years at the start of the war were finishing their service, as well as the men who enlisted for nine months under the Militia Draft of 1862.¹

Henry Wilson, Republican Senator from Massachusetts, first introduced the Enrollment Act of 1863 to Congress. The legislation stated that all men between the ages of twenty and forty-five were to be enrolled and possibly called up to join the service. There were to be exemptions made to men with special circumstances, such as those with a physical disability or those who were the sole supporters of motherless children. The true intention of the Act was to secure volunteers. The government hoped that those who were considering joining the Army would decide to do so if a draft was a possibility.²

The military did use other methods to secure volunteers. Bounties were offered to volunteers who joined the Army, giving various amounts of money depending on the local contributions to federal money. In October of 1863, the federal bounty was \$300 for all three-year volunteers. However, states and localities would often contribute sums of money in hopes of meeting their assigned quotas faster. The federal bounty was raised to \$1000 in 1864 as the need for soldiers became even greater. During the course of the war, the government paid out approximately half a billion dollars in bounties.³ One problem presented by the bounty system was that there were people who took advantage of it. Some citizens would enlist in one district, collect the bounty, then travel to another district and attempt the same act. Those who were caught were treated as deserters and were forced into military service.⁴

The first draft was called in July of 1863. Although any male citizen who met the age criteria could be called into service, many of

¹ Eugene Converse Murdock, *Patriotism Limited 1862-1865: The Civil War Draft and the Bounty System* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1967), 4-5, 7; James M. McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 355.

² McPherson, 355; Murdock, 7.

³ McPherson, 356.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 356.

them still refused to serve under any circumstance. They looked for ways to gain exemptions, such as finding a physician who would provide documentation of an illness that would get them out of fighting. Others would run away to Canada, or even other counties if they had been drafted in their home county. Still others went as far as having all their teeth pulled. Due to loopholes in the law, those who were truly determined to find a way out of being drafted were able to do so.⁵

There were two legitimate ways of getting out of serving once drafted: finding a substitute or paying a commutation fee. Wealthy men began looking to hire substitutes to fight in their place. These substitutes could expect to get a great deal of money from someone who was desperately trying to get out of fighting. The government therefore instituted the commutation fee, which allowed any drafted man to pay \$300, thus preventing the substitution fee from getting too high. Those choosing to pay the commutation fee would be exempted from that particular draft. This was not to say that he would be out of future drafts, however. A man who paid a commutation fee was still subject to being called up in future drafts.⁶

The \$300 commutation fee was a large sum of money in its day. The average blue collar worker could expect to pay approximately half a year's salary if choosing this option of getting out of military service. Many citizens were opposed to the commutation fee option because it was too high for the average American to pay, and therefore unfair to the poor and working class. The protest regarding the commutation fee was so great that Congress abolished it in July 1864.⁷

Many historians consider the Civil War draft an overall failure. For example, of the 292,441 men whose names were drawn during the summer 1863 draft:

- 56% were found exempt (for various reasons)

⁵ The Army required soldiers to have a certain number of teeth so that they were able to bite off the end of the cartridge while loading their weapon. Murdock, 52-55.

⁶ McPherson, 356.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 356-357.

- 18% commuted
- 13.5% did not report
- 9% provided substitutes, and
- less than 1 % were discharged upon reporting (for undocumented reasons).

This left approximately 3% of those men who had been called that actually joined the military and fought in the war. Although the draft was largely unsuccessful in getting men to join the Army, it did stimulate volunteerism, as it had originally been intended to do. Many men who had been considering joining the military did so upon the institution of the draft. Nearly one million men volunteered their services to the military during the years that the draft was in effect.⁸

When the first large-scale draft occurred, large numbers of potential draftees, and other politically minded citizens, rebelled against the government's action either by word or by deed. Although the majority of citizens understood the necessity of the draft, and viewed it as a means of the government asserting its strength and power throughout the land, not all felt the draft was fair and just. Riots took place in many large cities around the nation, including Milwaukee, Chicago, Boston, New York, Newark, and Albany. Many smaller incidents of rebellion occurred as well: groups of protesters in Indiana traveled from district to district stealing enrollment books and threatening government officials. At a special meeting in Boston on July 13, 1863, it was decided by a group of residents that, going along with the city's tradition of rebellion, they would refuse to enlist even if drafted and they refused to pay the commutation fee.⁹

Many small communities also used their local newspapers as a voice for their political opinions. The town of Palmer, Massachusetts was one such community. Palmer, a bustling railroad and factory town during the nineteenth century, had its beginnings as a small village twenty miles east of the city of Springfield. The John King family created the first permanent settlement in the area along the Quaboag

⁸ Murdock, 5, 13; McPherson, 357.

⁹ Edith Ellen Ware, *Political Opinion in Massachusetts During Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 131; Joseph E. Stevens, *The Rebirth of a Nation* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), 129, 301.

River in 1716. The area was originally called Elbow Plantation. Settlers petitioned the General Court in 1752 to officially name the town “Kingston” after John King. There was already a Kingston, MA, however. The governor named the town Palmer after his relative, Thomas Palmer, who had recently died in Scotland. Following the construction of the Western Railroad through the southern portion of the town in 1839, the area known as Depot Village began to grow immensely. The Western Railroad, which later became known as the Boston and Albany Railroad, was joined in Palmer by the New London Northern Railroad in 1850. With rail lines heading both east/west and north/south, Palmer became a major center for shipping and a common stop for travelers riding the rails through New England.¹⁰

At the time of the Civil War, Depot Village was a busy town center. There were many large buildings lining North Main Street, containing a variety of businesses and shops. The town consisted of people from many different backgrounds: the well-off, the poor, the railroad worker, and the common shop owner. The town, along with the major rail lines, also contained four rivers. Throughout the early nineteenth century, small villages began to grow along each of the rivers that ran through the town: Bondsville (originally known as Bond’s Village) developed along the Swift River; Thorndike was established along the Ware River; and the Village of Three Rivers was created where the Chicopee, Ware and Quaboag Rivers joined together. Although a small town, Palmer was full of activity and was showing signs of stable growth during the Civil War era.¹¹

The *Palmer Journal*, the local newspaper for Palmer and the surrounding communities, began as a weekly publication in 1850. Following the start of the American Civil War, then known as the War of the Rebellion, the *Journal* dedicated a large portion of its second page to the events of the war. Each week the *Journal* contained a column called “Latest War News.” The paper also published letters from soldiers telling about their experiences in the war. In the January 31, 1863 edition of the paper, the editor commented on the number of letters the paper had been receiving:

¹⁰ “Town of Palmer” [online] Available <http://www.townofpalmer.com/palm.html>, 3-2-2002.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

We give room in this issue to several letters from the army, and have one or two more left, which we shall be obliged to decline publishing. These letters will be read with interest by those having friends in the army, and who is there who has no friend in the field endeavoring to put down this rebellion?¹²

The Civil War made a large impact on the small town of Palmer. This statement in the *Journal* points out that nearly all citizens knew someone who was away at war, and therefore it was unnecessary for the paper to publish many letters. It was assumed that individual residents would have enough letters to read from their own friends and family.

In the early days of the war, the Town of Palmer took action to try to recruit volunteers and to assist the families of the soldiers. On May 4, 1861, it was voted by the town to raise a sum of \$3000 to be used to “provide for the families of the men in service.” On September 21, 1861, the town made its decisions as to how to assist the families by voting to “pay each member of the families of the volunteers....the sum of \$1 per week, so long as said volunteer remains in said service.”¹³

By the summer of 1862, volunteers were scarce. The Town of Palmer began to take action to initiate a local bounty system, which would supplement the bounty paid to volunteers by the federal government. The town offered a \$100 bounty to recruits beginning on July 19, 1862. The bounty amounts varied throughout the war, with the town voting to change the totals paid at different times. The amounts ranged from \$100 to \$300. When the demands for soldiers increased, so did the amount of the bounties.¹⁴

By early 1863, it was becoming apparent that the nation was in dire need of soldiers and the prospects of a Union victory looked bleak. The North had yet to experience any major victories and the morale of

¹² *Palmer Journal*, “Soldier’s Letters,” January 31, 1863, 2.

¹³ J.H. Temple, *History of the Town of Palmer* (Springfield, MA: Clark W. Bryan and Co., 1889), 307.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 308.

many Northerners was not good. The articles in the *Journal* expressed the confusion that was being felt by local citizens about the state of the Union's chances to win the war. The following example from the January 17, 1863 issue of the paper shows this feeling of desperation:

So long as the United States were prosperous and united, the kingdoms of the old world looked on with envy and praise; but now that we are divided and torn by internal insurrection, we are jeered at and insulted, the insurgents praised and encouraged, while loyal Government has become the by-word. To regain respect for our nation, we must be successful.¹⁵

The popular sentiment was that in order to redeem the good name of the United States, the Union must win the war.

The first mention of the possibility of conscription came in the February 14, 1863 edition of the *Journal*. The issue had been a concern of citizens of the North for some time, as the Confederacy had begun to draft citizens into military service the previous year. With its first mention of conscription, the *Journal* took a stance on the side that they felt it was unnecessary and would not assist in the war effort. The article entitled "Conscription at the North" states:

The failure to draft men in the free States is pretty conclusive evidence that a conscription act would be equally ineffective. We have now nearly a million men in the field and people have about come to the conclusion that if this powerful host cannot put down the rebellion, it will be useless to send another million to take their place.¹⁶

The author goes on to address the fact that a bill had been introduced in Congress that could lead to a draft of citizens in the North. The statement above seems to be designed to calm the concerns of Northern citizens and to reassure them that although Congress was considering

¹⁵ *Palmer Journal*, "Success," January 17, 1863, 2.

¹⁶ *Palmer Journal*, "Conscription at the North," February 14, 1863, 2.

the issue of a draft, they would not do it because it was not a logical thing to do. However, the idea of a Union draft was beginning to become a frightening reality to many. The same edition of the paper also contained an article entitled "A New Conscription Bill for the Rebels." The editors of the paper wanted to make certain that they reminded their readers that the Confederacy had already been using the draft to fill its military ranks.¹⁷

Over the course of the spring months, the *Journal* reported the details pertaining to the fact that the draft was actually going to take place. On February 28, the paper published an article stating that "the conscription bill reported by Senator Wilson....has passed both branches [houses of Congress] and will undoubtedly be signed by the President."¹⁸ Taking a complete reversal from its previous comments on the draft, the *Journal* reported, "The act, though rigid, demonstrates the power of the Government to sustain itself, and gives strength to the cause in which we are engaged. Without it, the army would soon become impotent, the war would cease, and Rebellion would triumph." Although trying to reassure its readers, the *Journal* tried to remain uncontroversial and maintain its patriotism through its reports on the war.¹⁹

The thought of being drafted horrified the many young men in the North who had previously decided not to volunteer to join the military. The *Journal* reported on March 28, 1863 that many young men were beginning to flee from America. The editor wrote, "Thousands have already left, preferring to have their names forever branded with the title of 'coward' than risk their chances of serving among the conscripts."²⁰ Some men were willing to do anything to avoid being drafted. As it was deemed unlikely for newly-married men to be drafted, many bachelors decided to do just that. In telling of one such case, the *Journal* reported that a man "who was a promising candidate

¹⁷ *Palmer Journal*, "A New Conscription Bill for the Rebels," February 14, 1863, 2.

¹⁸ *Palmer Journal*, "The Conscription Act," February 28, 1863, 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Palmer Journal*, "The Coming Draft -- Flight of the Conscripts," March 28, 1863, 2.

for eternal celibacy, has seized the first opportunity to escape, by putting his head into the hymenial noose, considering that a less dangerous operation than serving his country in a different capacity.”²¹ Although harshly worded, the point is made that desperation and fear abounded when it came to the thought of being drafted.

A poem published in the *Journal Register* on July 11, 1863 after the draft commenced days earlier, took on the draft in a humorous tone. The author of the poem, simply identified as Jenks, wrote the poem, which followed the same rhythm as Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Raven.” It was written from the perspective of a man who was afraid of being drafted and was trying to find a way out. The author introduced the poem as follows:

T’was upon one midnight dreary, while I wandered,
worn and weary, wandered homeward, pondering
various matters o’er. Of the drafting I was thinking.
From the draught of drinking I was shrinking,
shrinking, rather, from scenes of gore. The draft it kept
my heart a sinking -- I voted it a bore. It was that if
nothing more.

My knees were fairly shaking, and my heart was
quaking, as I revolved the subject o’er and o’er.
Although I was on the point of gaping, with an appetite,
the drums were still tapping, tapping harder than
before, as if they meant, by dint of rapping, to fairly
bore me with apprehensions sore.

I asked being called a mullet, or, perhaps, a cowardly
pullet, but then a minie bullet would hurt a great deal
more. This and more we sat divining, on the steps half
reclining, with the hall lamp dimly shining, and I
expressed a snore. I to sleep was fast inclining,
dreaming one thing o’er, how to escape that drafting
bore.²²

²¹ *Palmer Journal*, “Avoiding the Draft,” April 4, 1863, 2.

²² *Palmer Journal*, “The Draft,” June 11, 1863, 1.

As the story in the poem progresses, the author tells of falling asleep and dreaming about a way to get out of being drafted. He dreamed about men going to the doctor and faking illnesses and injuries in order to get proper documentation to become exempt from the draft. Jenks concluded the poem as follows:

Aha! quoth I, awaking, myself a shaking, I know how
to evade that blasted bore. The ceaseless drum was
beating, as I stood repeating the new idea of cheating
Uncle Sam a little more. I'd be as sick as Lazarus, and
complain forevermore, to escape the drafting bore. I'm
an invalid forevermore.²³

The Jenks poem, although humorous in nature, shows the fear that was felt by many when they were faced with the reality of fighting in the war. Many of those who were looking for excuses to get out of fighting would seek desperate measures, such as the example given in the poem of faking an illness or injury. This poem appeared, not on the usual page of war news, but as a front-page feature of the paper, proving that the draft was an issue that was on the minds of many.

Fear of the draft existed elsewhere in the North as well and the *Journal* took the opportunity to report of incidents of draft protests and rebellions that occurred throughout the Union. The New York City draft riots are one of the most well-known and most devastating riots that took place at the beginning of the Civil War draft. The *Journal* provided basic coverage of the event and also expressed the opinions of the editorial staff in short columns throughout the paper. One such article attempted to convince readers that the draft must be enforced for the good of the country and that all must obey the laws of the land. The article read:

The Administration feels the importance of an immediate enforcement of the draft, if for no other purpose than to obtain obedience to a law already resisted in so many places. To that end, troops will garrison New York in sufficient numbers to suppress

²³ Ibid.

all disloyal demonstrations when the draft is again commenced.²⁴

The editors wanted to assure the citizens that although major disturbances had occurred in New York, the government would not tolerate such acts. The government's laws must be obeyed because it is the government that is protecting the citizens and the preservation of the Union that it represents serves as the reason for fighting the war.

The *Journal* reported on June 20, 1863 of another incident, this time in New Jersey, in which a mob of women tried to obstruct the enrolling of local men for the draft. The paper stated that the women, "...set upon the enrolling officers, assailing them with stones... compelling them to temporarily retire from the field. In another ward...one of the officers was assailed by a woman with a carving knife...but in the face of these demonstrations the enrolling was kept up."²⁵ It was common for citizens to turn to violence to protest the draft and in many instances those protesting were not the men being drafted. According to the *Journal*, women were "more generally opposed to it than men."²⁶ While the men being drafted had to live with the fear of dying, women were forced to live with the fear of losing someone they loved, living alone, becoming widows, and being unable to tend the home and children.

Once the draft was initiated, each state received a quota of soldiers that it was required to fill. From there, the states divided the total quota up into varying portions for each city and town. On July 11, 1863 the *Journal* released information regarding the quotas for Palmer and the neighboring communities. The quota for Palmer was fifty men, but seventy-five would be drafted so that room would be allowed for exemptions.²⁷ There would also be cases in which men would opt out of fighting by paying the \$300 commutation fee. The *Journal* clearly declared its stance against the fee in a July 18, 1863 article entitled "Hardships and Favors of the Draft." The editor stated:

²⁴ *Palmer Journal*, "Necessity For Enforcing the Draft," July 25, 1863, 2.

²⁵ *Palmer Journal*, "Obstructing the Draft," June 20, 1863, 2.

²⁶ *Palmer Journal*, "A Variety of Things," July 18, 1863, 2.

²⁷ *Palmer Journal*, "The Draft," July 11, 1863, 2.

There are some things in the conscription act...that seem unjust. In the first place, the poor man, who is unable to raise \$300, complains that it is unequal because of this provision, which cuts him off from exemption, and allows the rich man a loop hole of escape; 2d, it is claimed that the \$300 paid for exemption only relieved a person from that draft, and his name goes into the wheel again for the next drawing; 3d, that the man who gets examined to ascertain whether he is really liable to serve, cannot have the privilege of the \$300 exemption clause if accepted....any attempt to distort or pervert it [the Conscription Act] only makes it more obnoxious, and begets additional trouble in its execution. Let the government deal justly, and the people will respond manfully.²⁸

For the most part, Palmer was a town of average to lower class citizens. Most made their living as farmers, factory workers, shop-owners, or railroad employees. The average citizen of Palmer was not likely to be able to afford to pay the commutation fee. This is probably what motivated the previous article in the *Journal*. Most townspeople were upset about the commutation fee because they felt it was unfair to the poor, and many citizens of Palmer fell into that category.

It was also in the July 18, 1863 edition of the *Journal* that the list of those drafted in Palmer and the surrounding communities was first published and released to the public. Before releasing the names, the paper reported a controversy surrounding the calling of those drafted, and the accuracy of the lists used by the enrolling officers. It was stated that "a few copperheads started a report that the enrolling officer had left off the list several names, or, after having registered, erased them." Although these were harsh claims, they are hard if not impossible to prove. It only managed to enrage the citizens of the town, many believing the stories because they could not prove otherwise. The *Journal* appeared to be attempting to calm the citizens by reminding them that even if this did happen, it could have been an honest mistake, and not done intentionally. The paper stated that the editors felt the

²⁸ *Palmer Journal*, "Hardships and Favors of the Draft," July 18, 1863, 2.

“roll should have been published, that everyone might see for himself that no injustice was practiced.” They went on to say that “Even at this late date we propose publishing the roll if it can be obtained of the Provost Marshal, and while we are about it we propose to publish any well-authenticated list of the copperheads in this vicinity that may be furnished to us.”²⁹ The *Journal* placed blame for the confusion and chaos on the copperheads, or Northerners who were sympathetic to the Southern cause. The list of the names of all seventy-five Palmer citizens who were called up in the first draft followed that article.

Although the first draft call for Palmer allowed room for up to twenty-five men to be found exempt and the quota still be filled, this estimation was largely inaccurate. This fact was apparent to the editors at the *Journal* before the numbers were in. In a July 25, 1863 article, the paper published the following:

At the present writing, we hear of no instance in which the drafted man proposes to go. Every man has an excuse which he deems sufficient to exempt him, or \$300 which he is certain will. We do not think the draft will realize half a dozen men from Palmer -- if this is the case elsewhere, Government will get few men by drafting until the law is changed, making it imperative that every man who is drafted shall serve or procure a substitute.³⁰

Local gossip about the intentions of the draftees in Palmer gave the editors of the *Journal* the opinion that the draft would be a failure. This opinion developed quickly, as the names and reason for exemptions would not be printed and released for another two weeks.

The *Journal's* estimation, although numerically inaccurate, was right on track with the actual happenings among the draftees. Seventy-five men from the Town of Palmer were called in the July 1863 draft, however only thirty-one of them were found fit for service, and still more commuted or found substitutes. Of those called:

²⁹ *Palmer Journal*, “The Enrolment,” July 18, 1863, 2.

³⁰ *Palmer Journal*, “The Draft,” July 25, 1863, 2.

- 25% were found exempt for medical reasons
- 21% were aliens, and thus ineligible for the draft
- 11% paid the commutation fee
- 8% were exempt for family reasons
- 7% furnished substitutes
- 3% were exempt for previous service in the war, and
- 1 % were underage

Only eighteen men out of the original seventy-five could be sent to fill Palmer's quota of fifty men.³¹

Similar situations occurred in neighboring communities as well. The *Journal* reported that the draft in Belchertown, which borders Palmer on the northwest, called for sixty-three men, with a town quota of forty-two. Following the examinations, only thirteen of those called were found fit to serve. Twelve of these men either found a substitute or commuted, leaving but one man to serve toward the town quota. The *Journal's* theories had been correct and this problem existed throughout the Union. The draft was, inevitably, an overall failure.³²

During the month of August 1863, when it became apparent that large numbers of men were being found physically unfit to serve in the military, the *Journal* published an editorial entitled "Unsound Men" which addressed this issue. The article begins:

If the draft for soldiers does not succeed in filling our depleted regiments, it will establish the fact that this is a physically unsound generation. If the judgment of the medical profession is worth anything, we must set it down upon the record that seventy-five out of every hundred men are diseased or defective.³³

The tone of the article seems to be directed at men who would be willing to do fake an illness or disability to avoid service. Although the article

³¹ *Palmer Journal*, "The Draft," July 18, 1863, 2; "Exemption," August 15, 1863, 2; "Exempts," August 22, 1863, 2.

³² *Palmer Journal*, "Belchertown," August 1, 1863, 2.

³³ *Palmer Journal*, "Unsound Men," August 8, 1863, 2.

does not directly state it as fact, it appears to be trying to make men feel bad for feigning a physical disability, and trying to convince them to attempt to pass the exams so as to make their generation and countrymen appear strong and healthy. The article continues in the same tone, but touching on a more personal note:

It has often been hinted that if a man desires to raise a healthy family, he should not take to himself an unhealthy partner; but will not the hint apply equally well on the other side? A woman expects a man to be her superior in physical ability, and, as she trusts to him for support and protection, should she not be cautious in accepting one who is diseased or infirm?³⁴

The article attempts to convince men that they should not want to be found in ill health because any smart woman would not choose a diseased man for a mate. To drive his point home, the editor ends the article with the line, "Heaven bless them [the soldiers], and pity the exempts!"³⁵

The *Journal* also attacks those who choose to commute by instructing them of the payment method as follows: "Drafted men in this vicinity who contemplate sacrificing \$300 instead of serving their country with muskets, can pay their money to U.S. Collector Tinker, who will be in attendance at the provost marshal's office."³⁶ This statement made the point that it was a cowardly act to give up a large sum of hard earned money rather than fight for the preservation of one's nation.³⁷

Following the final list of exemptions in the *Journal*, which was published on August 22, 1863 talk of the draft all but disappears from

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Palmer Journal*, "Exemption Money," August 1, 1863, 2.

³⁷ It is interesting to note that although a great many citizens were against the commutation fee method of opting out of war service, the town of Palmer voted, at a meeting in March 1866, to pay back the \$300 commutation fee to all town residents who could furnish proof of payment (thirty men in all); Temple, 309.

the pages of the paper. The initial hype surrounding the draft was considered highly newsworthy by the paper, but once the final decisions had been made, it was no longer an important news event for which coverage was necessary. Occasional articles begin to appear in mid-September stating that there is a rumor circulating that another draft will be necessary to fill the quotas that were not filled in the first draft call. There was little talk of the second draft until it actually occurred. The May 21, 1864 edition of the *Journal* printed the list of those called to service in the second draft.

Those called by a supplementary draft were listed in the *Journal* on June 11, 1864. However, the paper reported the following week that the town's quota was declared full because "that number of men [had] been bought in Boston and credited to Palmer."³⁸ In the June 25, 1864 edition of the paper, a large list of those Palmer residents donating money for this cause was printed. No list of exemptions can be found following the second draft and discussion of the issue in the paper dropped off to almost nothing.

Similar to printing poetry to express the opinions of the people, the *Journal* printed a piece in the May 28, 1864 edition of the paper that was intended to poke fun at the draft in general and the town's actions regarding the draft. The writing is made to sound like a Biblical piece and refers to Abraham, the ruler of the land, and Ulysses, the commander of the armies. The overall plot of the work tells of Abraham instructing his messengers to get people to join and assist Ulysses in his attempts to end the rebellion. It goes on to make fun of the option of traveling to other towns to collect higher bounties, of using medical excuses to avoid serving, and of the fact that Palmer paid its way out of having to produce all the men to fill its quota.³⁹

The work ends with the line, "So it came to pass that many are called but few are chosen." That statement clearly sums up Palmer's role in the draft, as well as that of the draft throughout the nation. Throughout the entire course of the war, 776,829 names were drawn among the four drafts that were called. Taking away those that were found exempt for various reasons, and those who found substitutes or

³⁸ *Palmer Journal*, "Our Quota Full," June 18, 1864, 2.

³⁹ *Palmer Journal*, "Chronicles of the Draft in Palmer," May 28, 1864, 2.

paid commutation, only 46,347 were actually held to service, an amount equal to just under 6% of the total number called.⁴⁰

The town of Palmer quickly put the events behind it and continued to grow and thrive throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. By 1885, the town had a population of 5,923 and was still growing. It was renowned for its cotton mills, carpet factory, textile mills and other manufacturing plants as well as its strong National Bank, numerous schools and churches, and for the *Palmer Journal's* large circulation.⁴¹

Despite the problems with the draft, the North was successful in its cause of preserving the Union and winning the War of the Rebellion. Many factors, such as the Union's battle successes in mid-1863 which increased soldiers' morale, and the economic problems of the Confederacy, contributed to the overall Union victory in the war.

⁴⁰ *Palmer Journal*, "Chronicles of the Draft in Palmer," May 28, 1864, 2; Peter Levine, "Draft Evasion in the North During the Civil War, 1863-1865," *Journal of American History*, March 1981, 819.

⁴¹ Elias Nason, *A Gazetteer of the State of Massachusetts* (Boston: B.B. Russell, 1890), 528 - 529.

While reviewing some Civil War materials, I encountered mention of the New York City Draft Riots, which reminded me of my own experience with the draft back in the late 1960s. Whether there was a war or not, I had no interest in joining the military, but it was out of my hands. Across the land, the order was funneled down to county and town levels, where volunteers were sought. If a town's quota wasn't filled by men joining of their own volition, bounties (bonuses) were introduced: the government, the local municipality, or private citizens offered money to entice recruits. Truth be told, the reaction to the draft in the 1860s was typical. A small minority of men (but still numbering in the thousands) opted for draft dodging: many went West or paid an extended visit to Canada. At a small town named Gettysburg a Union army blocked his way. The battle which followed was the biggest that has ever been fought in the United States. In three days of fierce fighting more than 50,000 men were killed or wounded. The Civil War gave final answers to two questions that had divided the United States ever since it became an independent nation. It put an end to slavery. In 1865 this was abolished everywhere in the United States by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution.