

1-8-2013

Lawrence in the Civil War

Erin Dix

Lawrence University, erin.k.dix@lawrence.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://lux.lawrence.edu/lib_pp



Part of the [History Commons](#)

© Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Recommended Citation

Dix, Erin, "Lawrence in the Civil War" (2013). *Library Publications and Presentations*. 3.
https://lux.lawrence.edu/lib_pp/3

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Seeley G. Mudd Library at Lux. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of Lux. For more information, please contact colette.brautigam@lawrence.edu.



Lawrence in the Civil War

Erin Dix, '08, university archivist

January 8, 2013

Intro – Welcome

This talk is part of a series of events on campus commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. We are also in the middle of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War more generally. And the library is currently hosting the “Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War” traveling exhibit from the National Constitution Center and the American Library Association, up through February 8th. So, we thought it would be a good time to explore what Lawrence was like during this time – how the war affected the campus community, both for the students, faculty, and alumni who fought in the war and for those who stayed at home. This will be a relatively informal and certainly not exhaustive look at this topic – questions anytime.



Main Hall dedication, 1854

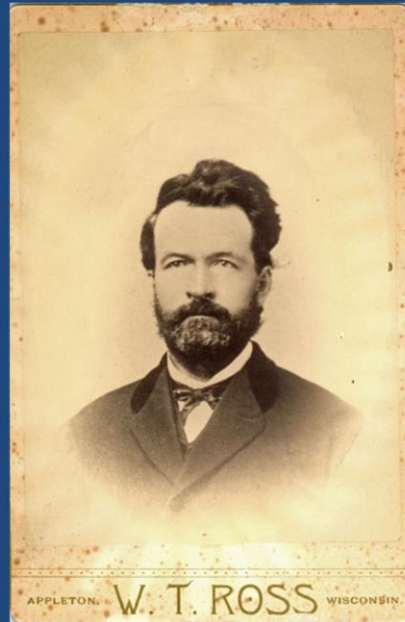
What was Lawrence like at the time?

Lawrence was founded in 1847 and classes started in the late fall of 1849, so we had been actively operating for 11 years when the war began. Having opened with just 35 students, attendance peaked at over 440 students in the mid-1850s. This was larger than the enrollment at the University of Wisconsin, so Lawrence had a significant presence in the statewide higher education scene – it also served as a draw for Appleton settlers. Because we operated as both a preparatory school and a college, many of the students at Lawrence were high-school age and from the Appleton area. Having started out with only students at the preparatory level, it wasn't until 1857 that the first class of four men and three women graduated from the college. So, only four college classes had graduated by the start of the war.

Main Hall had been built in 1853 and was still one of the largest buildings for miles around. It housed classrooms, administrative and faculty offices, a chapel, men's dormitory, and the college library. After the first building constructed on campus was destroyed by a fire in 1857, Main Hall served as the sole campus building until Ormsby Hall was built over 30 years later.

Lawrence had been founded as a Methodist institution, so the ranks of the faculty included many members of the Methodist clergy, and many male graduates went on to become Methodist clergymen as well. Student life: Students were required to attend chapel twice a day and visit a local church twice each Sunday; drinking and attending theatrical performances were banned; interactions with members of the opposite sex were strictly regulated – none of this was unusual for a college at this time. By 1861, we had seen three leaders of the institution –William Harkness Sampson, Edward Cooke, and Russell Zelotes Mason.

"Lawrence University was not slow to declare itself for the Union. A war meeting was called to meet in the College Chapel. I was called to the chair, though not strictly according to my ecclesiastical training and relations I claim the honor of making the first war speech that was made in the community if not in that state. There were other speeches made that evening...These speeches all bore fruit. Enlistments were numerous."



Russell Zelotes Mason, circa 1865

The Start of the War

Mason was president from 1859 to 1865. In addition to the hardships that were to come with the war, he also faced \$20,000 in debt that had accumulated during the previous administration, which he did manage to eliminate over the course of his tenure. He did this in part by drastically cutting faculty salaries, from \$800/year in 1859 to \$500/year by 1863 (his own salary dropped from \$1,000 to \$700.) In his written account of the early history of Lawrence, Mason remembered the first meeting called in reaction to the firing on Fort Sumter in April, 1861: "Lawrence University was not slow to declare itself for the Union. A war meeting was called to meet in the College Chapel. I was called to the chair, though not strictly according to my ecclesiastical training and relations I claim the honor of making the first war speech that was made in the community if not in that state. There were other speeches made that evening...These speeches all bore fruit. Enlistments were numerous."

Jerome Watrous, an Appleton resident at the time, remembered: "graduates and others from neighboring cities came to attend the meeting...After a few words of introduction, Professor Henry Pomeroy, pointing at the stars and stripes, said, and with a tremble in his voice: 'If that flag goes down never to rise in honor again, it will be the greatest misfortune to civilization that has ever overtaken it.' He then enumerated some of the many disasters that would follow the overthrow of the government of the United States. Drawing himself up to his full height, and throwing his head back, he again pointed to the flag and said: 'Fellow citizens, I say to you that that flag shall not go down in disgrace. I say to you that the patriotism of the people of the North is such that every dollar and every man will be placed at the service of Abraham Lincoln in restoring peace.' After this grand and patriotic flight there was an outburst by the audience that fairly made the building shake, well as it is founded. Such clapping of hands, stamping of feet and hurraing were never before heard in Appleton. When quiet was restored, Professor Pomeroy, looking to heaven and raising his right hand, said: 'I am not going to ask any of these people to go to the war, but I am going to ask some of them to come with me to the war.'"

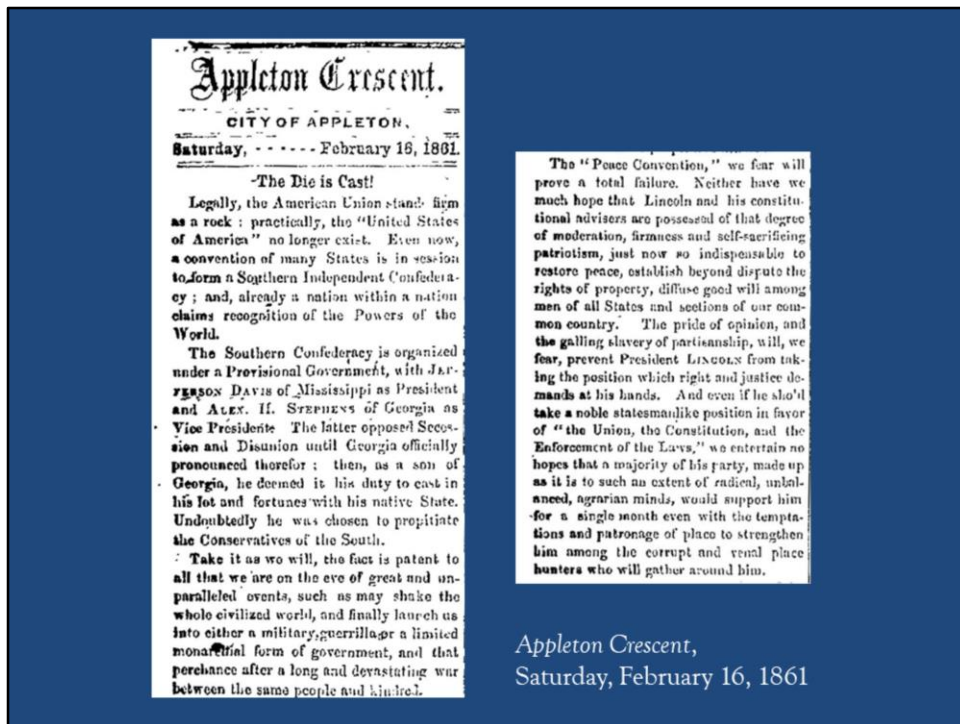


Main Hall and surrounding community, ca. 1860

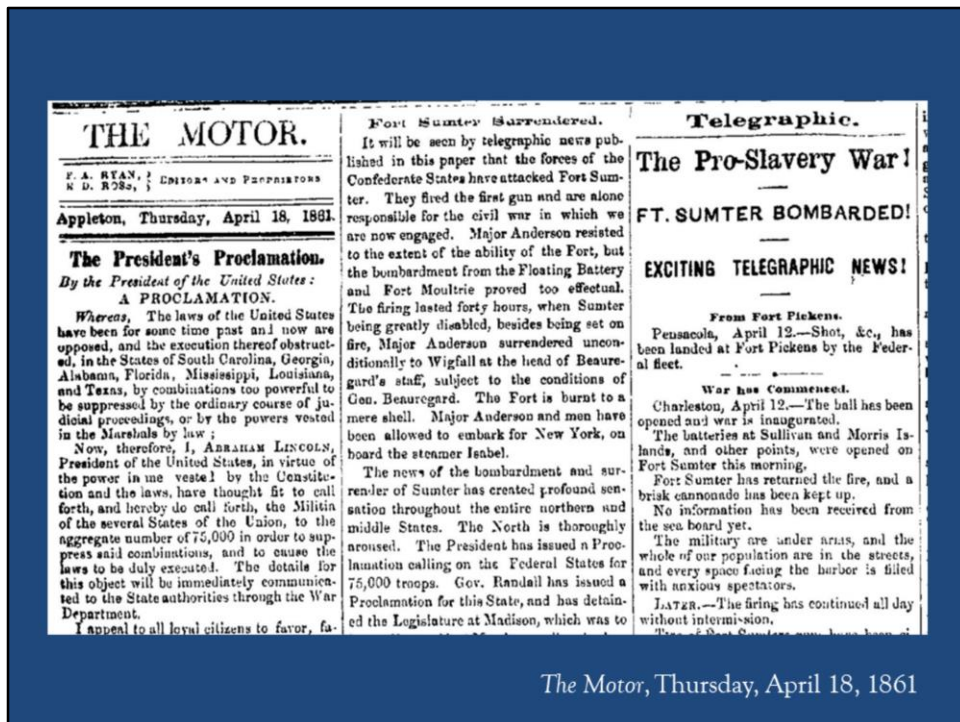
Sentiment about slavery and the war at Lawrence and in Appleton

Watrous gave this account years after the fact, and it's certainly dramatic – it might give the impression of unanimous support for the war in Appleton. But there were some definite differences of opinion on the subject of slavery and secession in the years leading up to the war in Appleton.

Methodists, along with Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and some other denominations, were considered to be progressive Christians during this era – which meant that they were strongly abolitionist. So as a Methodist institution, Lawrence, its administration, faculty, and students were generally anti-slavery in the years leading up to the war. Many of the people in Appleton were also progressive Christians of this ilk, particularly those living in the first ward around Lawrence and City Park. These people were also strongly Republican. But there were many others from different ethnic and religious backgrounds living in other Appleton wards who were Democratic and not abolitionist.



The first newspaper in Appleton was the *Crescent*, founded in 1853 – a Democratic publication. This is an editorial from early 1861 at the time of the Peace Conference, called to try to prevent the war. It shows the Democratic leanings of the editors: "The 'Peace Convention' we fear will prove a total failure. Neither have we much hope that Lincoln and his constitutional advisers are possessed of that degree of moderation, firmness, and self-sacrificing patriotism, just now so indispensable to restore peace, establish beyond dispute the rights of property, diffuse good will among men of all States and sections of our country. The pride of opinion, and the galling slavery of partisanship, will, we fear, prevent President Lincoln from taking the position which right and justice demands at his hands. And even if he sho'd take a noble statesmanlike position in favor of 'the Union, the Constitution, and the Enforcement of the Laws,' we entertain no hopes that a majority of his party, made up as it is so such an extent of radical, unbalanced, agrarian minds, would support him for a single month even with the temptations and patronage of place to strengthen him among the corrupt and venal place hunters who will gather around him."



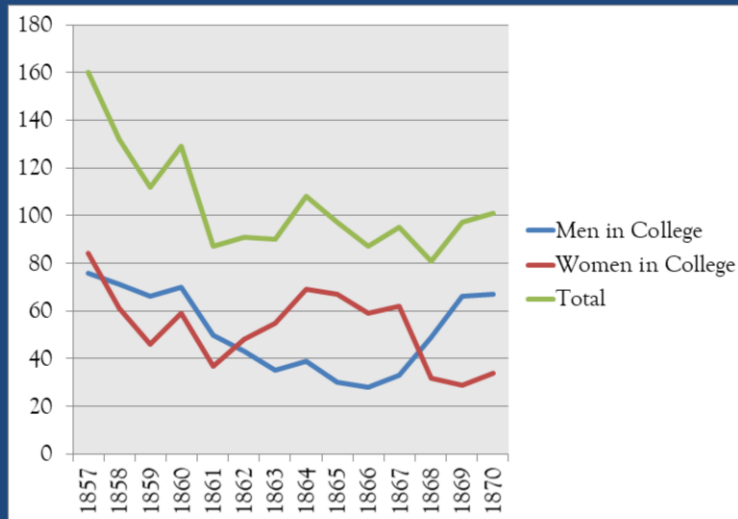
The Motor, Thursday, April 18, 1861

By 1859, Republicans in Appleton wanted their own publication, and so formed the *Appleton Motor*, which later became the *Appleton Post*. This excerpt shows the reporting in the first issue published following the firing on Fort Sumter in April, 1861.

By contrast, when the war was first declared, the *Crescent* complained that the war would “flood Wisconsin with a race of beings whom we will all be obliged to treat as inferiors no matter what laws may be passed...acknowledging them as equals.”

In the end, both Republicans and Democrats in Appleton were strongly supportive of the Union war effort, even if their underlying reasons for support were very different.

Number of Students Attending College at Lawrence, 1857-1870

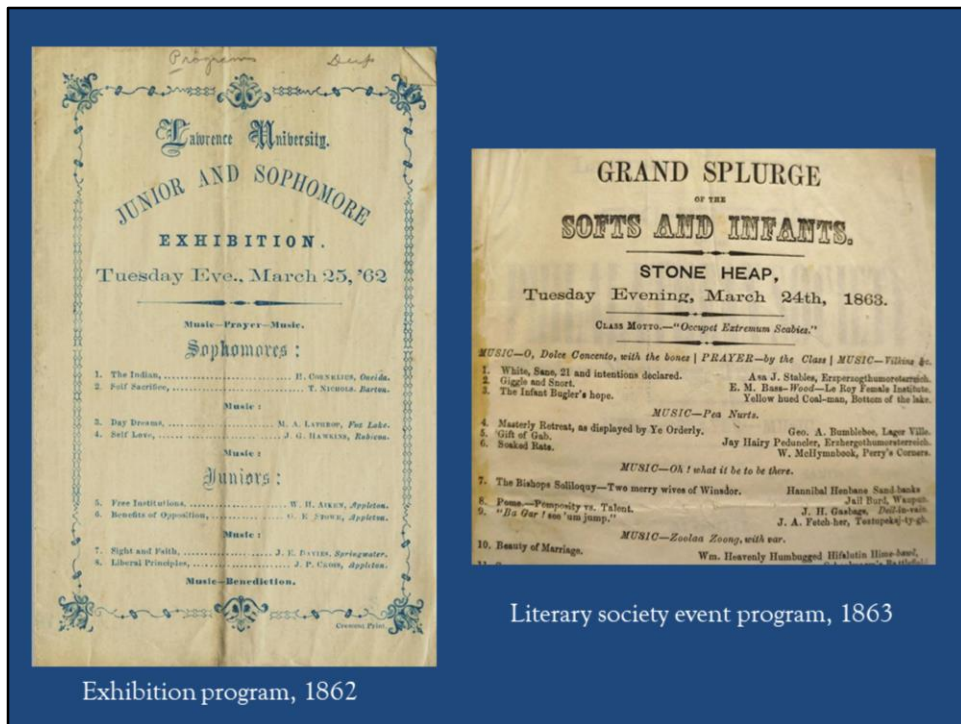


Source: William Francis Raney, *The History of Lawrence University, 1847-1925*

Enrollment changes

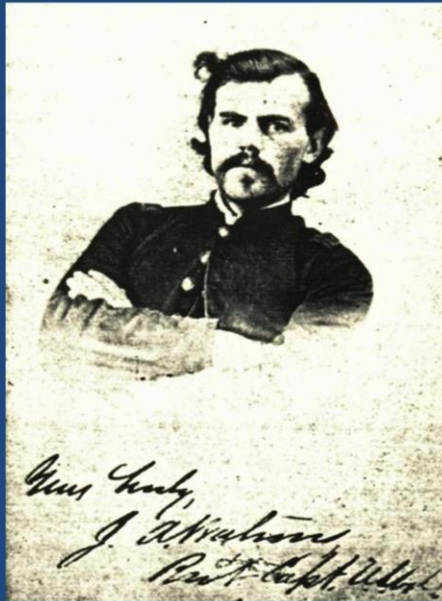
One of the biggest impacts of the war was a huge change in enrollment. This chart shows enrollment just at the college level (not preparatory). The green is overall enrollment in the college, which dropped substantially during the war years. This actually started in the late 1850s due to financial panics. The blue shows the enrollment of men in the college, which dropped during the war years. In June of 1860, there were 70 men attending in the college – this dropped to 50 the following year and dropped continually until it hit a low point of 28 by 1866. The attendance of women in the college, shown in red, took the opposite trajectory, rising from 37 in June of 1861 to 69 in 1864.

This lowered enrollment also occurred in the preparatory school. In 1856-57, there were 254 students in the preparatory school. During the war years, the lowest enrollment in the preparatory school was 144 – 57% of what it had been in 1857. The lower enrollment, of course, had a negative impact on finances.



For students who did stay at Lawrence during the war years, one student described the atmosphere in this way: the environment was not “favorable to study and reflection for the few who were in attendance. Nearly all had some near and dear to them at the war and every rumor of a battle turned attention and thought southward, with a dread of that which might be, and often was. It was a period of unrest and apprehension. Classes were broken up and class cohesion and solidarity destroyed by frequent changes and withdrawals of teachers and students. The one overwhelming thought of the war and its attendant evils, reaching nearly every family and individual in the nation, made mental concentration on things which seemed light and trivial by comparison, an impossibility.”

Nevertheless, activities continued at Lawrence as best they could. On the left is a program from a junior and sophomore exhibition in 1862, including orations and music presented by students. This is no different than such a program would have looked before or after the war. On the right is presumably a literary society event program from 1863 – this shows an example of something a bit more light-hearted going on.



Jerome A. Watrous, 1865

"Modesty or courage kept us from the White House, but we held a position on the grounds, hoping that our candidate of the year before would appear. Mr. Lincoln took us by surprise while we were watching a regiment pass on Pennsylvania avenue. He was the first to speak. 'My boys, I see by your uniforms that you have come to help me save the Union – to be my partners in the enterprise'..."

Lawrentians who fought

No one kept an accurate record of the number of Lawrentians who served in the war. We do know that 29 students who graduated from the college did serve – this does not include the many students who attended only the preparatory school or those who attended some years of the college but did not graduate. William Raney states in his written history of Lawrence: "About 81,000 men from Wisconsin served in the armies of the Union at one time or another. To this number Lawrence made its contribution, both in those who left college and in those who, because of the war, never got there at all."

Many Lawrence students enlisted with units from their own home communities, but two units had concentrations of Lawrentians. Company E of the 6th Wisconsin was formed in June of 1861 and included 29 men from Appleton – seven of these had been enrolled at Lawrence. The Sixth Wisconsin went on to become part of the Iron Brigade, which fought with distinction at Second Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg, and had the highest percentage of deaths in battle of all Union brigades by the end of the war.

One of the seven students who had attended Lawrence who enlisted in this company was Jerome A. Watrous. Watrous attended Lawrence in 1859, having entered at age 18 in the hopes of working through college and becoming a lawyer. He was not able to make enough money to continue beyond that year, and he found a job at the *Crescent*. By 1861, he was an editor and owner of the paper. He was present at the meeting at Main Hall after the firing on Fort Sumter and enlisted soon thereafter. Throughout his time in service, he sent reports from the field which were published in the *Crescent*. The Archives has a compilation of his writings from the field and remembrances of his experiences, which include a recounting of this incident:

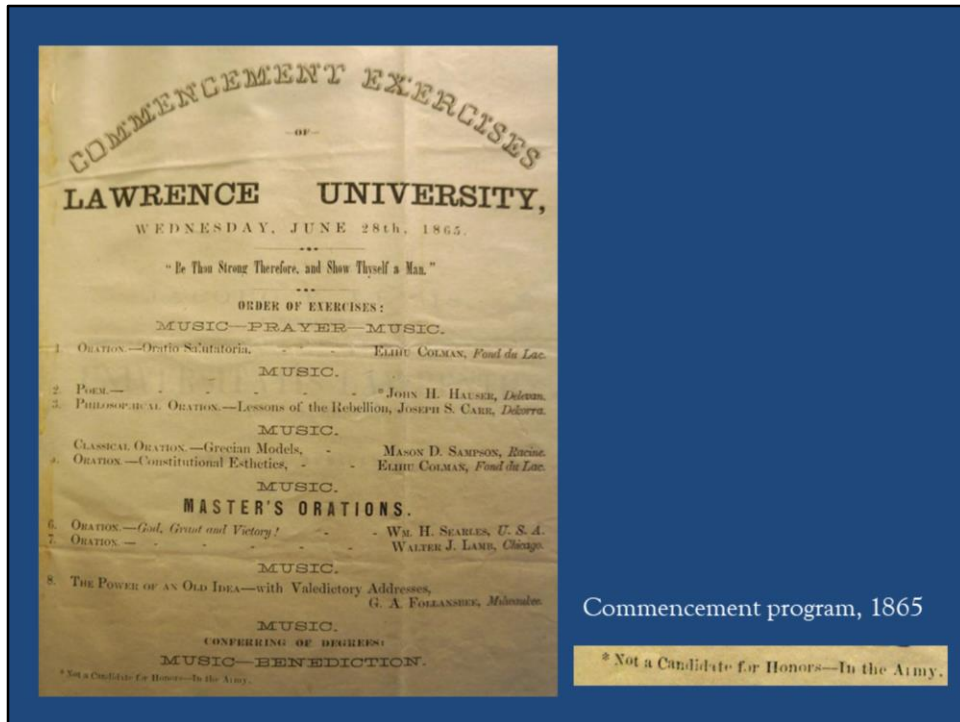
In early August, 1861, his regiment was in Washington, D.C. and Watrous met his brother for a visit. They hoped to get a look at President Lincoln, which they managed to do. Fifty years later, Watrous recalled: "Modesty or courage kept us from the White House, but we held a position on the grounds, hoping that our candidate of the year before would appear. Mr. Lincoln took us by surprise while we were watching a regiment pass on Pennsylvania avenue. He was the first to speak. 'My boys, I see by your uniforms that you have come to help me save the Union – to be my partners in the enterprise.' He asked what state we were from, said Wisconsin was sending many good men, and when he shook hands expressed the hope that our lives would be spared, and that we would never regret the partnership. To have looked into the Lincoln face, at close range, heard the Lincoln voice, had our hands enclosed in the ample Lincoln hand, was glory enough for more than that one August day of fifty years ago."

Watrous' brother was killed in battle at Port Hudson just over a year after this meeting, but Watrous did make it through the war. He was promoted to Adjutant General of the 6th Wisconsin in 1864. He was taken prisoner during a battle in Five Forks, just nine days before the surrender at Appomattox, and he was presumed dead – his obituary was published in a number of newspapers, including the *Crescent*. He went on to work with newspapers in Black River Falls, Fond Du Lac, and Milwaukee. He was state commander of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1894, and he reviewed Lawrence's role in the war at the college's semicentennial celebration in 1897.

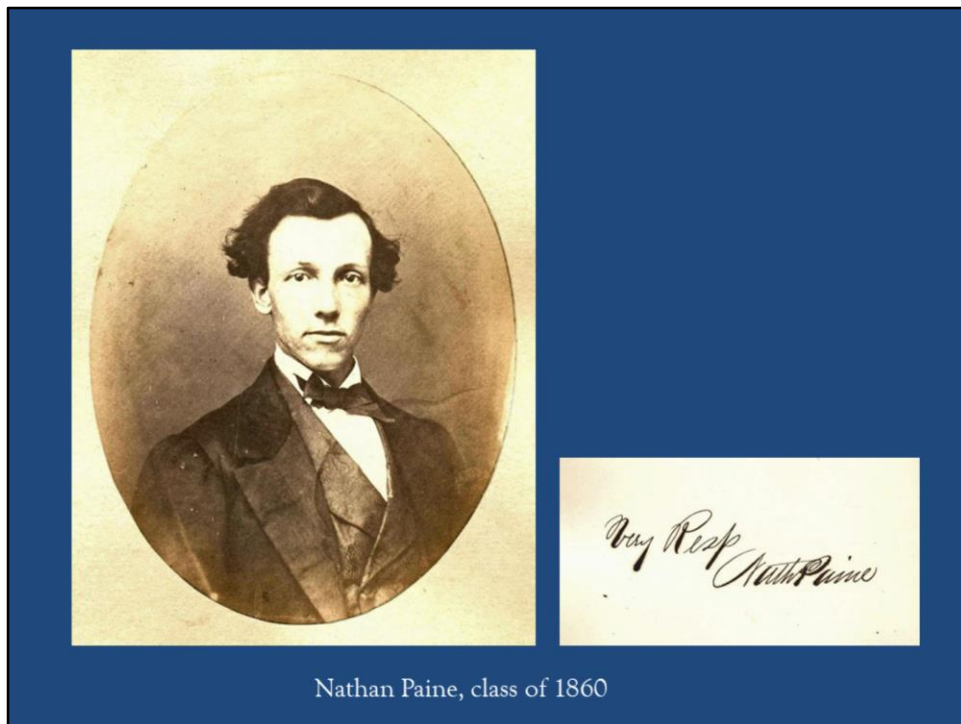
Company E of the 40th
Wisconsin muster roll



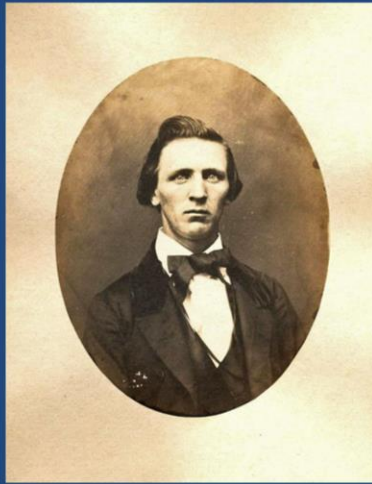
The largest concentration of Lawrentians in any army unit was in Company E of the 40th Regiment – these men served from May to September of 1864. Lincoln had issued a call for men to serve for 100 days to replace soldiers on garrison duty to go to the front, so this company was put together in answer to that call. Of 44 men from Appleton enlisted in this regiment, 23 were Lawrence students. Every college in the state had representatives in the 40th regiment, and company E became known as the “Lawrence guards.”



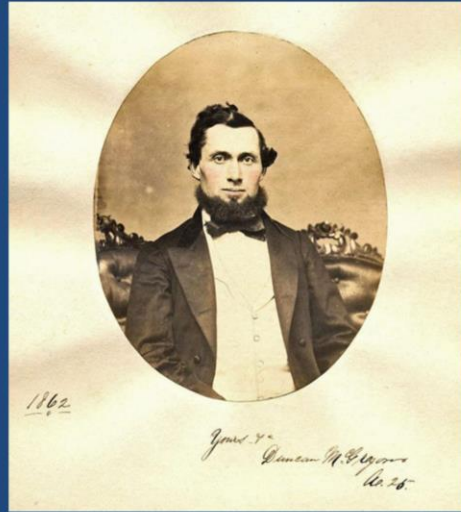
One of these enlisted Lawrence students was John Harrison Hauser, class of 1865. He had entered the preparatory school in 1860 at age 24 and joined the freshman class in 1861. After serving the 100 days as Captain of Company E, he returned to finish his studies at Lawrence. In February of 1865, he read in the paper another call for enlistment and went straight to President Mason and told him he was going back to war. Mason called a meeting of the faculty, who voted that they would not graduate Hauser – they feared that he would encourage other students to leave at a time when the institution could not afford to lose any more. After Hauser insisted, the faculty relented and allowed that he could graduate but would not be a candidate for first honors. So Hauser joined the 49th Wisconsin, which left for the front on March 8, 1865. He took his final exams in the field in Missouri. The questions were sent to his Colonel at a time when Hauser himself was absent on duty. So he rode 20 miles to the Colonel's headquarters, for which he was later reprimanded by the General in command. After completing his exams, Hauser was informed by President Mason that he could receive second honors, but Hauser replied that he did not want any honors if he could not have the first honors that he was entitled to. 1865 Commencement program shows orations given by all of the male graduates. Hauser was "not a candidate for honors – in the army." Hauser recounted all of this in a letter to Samuel Plantz in 1905. He said: "This is past history, although not forgotten. I forgive the faculty for they knew nothing but Latin and Greek and Higher Mathematics."



Nathan Paine was class of 1860 and a member of a prosperous Oshkosh family – the same family as that of the Paine Art Center and Gardens in Oshkosh. He enlisted in Company G of the First regiment of the Wisconsin Cavalry in 1861. Because his family was so well off, he could have chosen to pay someone to serve in his place, but enlisted right off the bat. He was elected lieutenant and then promoted to Captain. In 1863, he was promoted again to Major for gallant service on the field. He was killed in battle on July 28, 1864, at the head of his command outside of Campbellstown, Georgia. His widow was Olive Copeland, also class of 1860, and they had a daughter that he never met.



Albert Lamb, class of 1860



Duncan McGregor, class of 1862

Albert Lamb, class of 1860, served as a volunteer field assistant and scout, was taken prisoner outside of Richmond. His entry in the 1915 alumni record simply states that his death was supposed in Libby Prison.

Duncan McGregor, class of 1862, enlisted in 1864 and was commissioned Captain of Company A of the 42nd Wisconsin. He was mustered out at the end of the war.

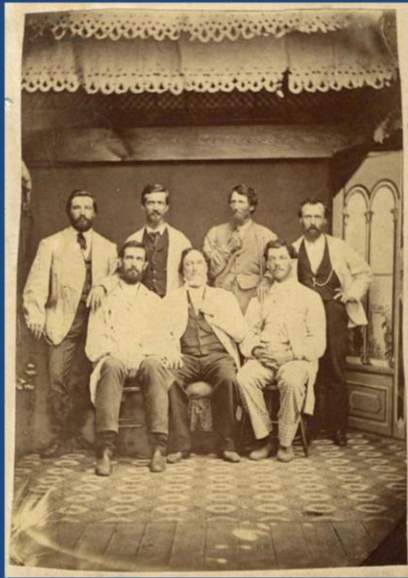


Francena Kellogg Buck, (right), 1857



Francena Kellogg Buck, circa 1925

Norman Buck, class of 1859, and his fiancée at the time, Francena Medora Kellogg Buck, class of 1857, also participated in the war effort. Norman enlisted in the war as a private in a Minnesota regiment in May of 1862 and was mustered out as Captain by the end of the war. Francena served with the United States Christian Commission working in Southern hospitals. She recalled in 1915: "We fought disease and wounds with low-diet, pudding, and pancakes." She went from Nashville to Memphis to Washington, D.C. She was in the gallery of the representative's hall in the joint session of Congress when they declared that Lincoln had been elected to a second term.



"It was almost pathetic to see bronzed and bearded men, who had been accustomed to command, and used to the gravest responsibilities, sitting in the classrooms beside those who were years their juniors, reaching out after the lines they had let go five or six years before, reciting to teachers younger in years and life experience..."

After the War

In the fall of 1865, between 40 and 50 men returned to Lawrence from having served in the army. There were veterans at Lawrence through 1870. J.S. Anderson, class of 1870, recalled these years: "It was almost pathetic to see bronzed and bearded men, who had been accustomed to command, and used to the gravest responsibilities, sitting in the classrooms beside those who were years their juniors, reaching out after the lines they had let go five or six years before, reciting to teachers younger in years and life experience. Many a Saturday night when the week's work was done, a group of choice spirits would gather in one or another of the dormitory rooms, exchange army experiences, and sing the war songs of that period till the walls of the old building trembled. Not many of these remained to graduate, most of them were impressed with the thought that they must go about their life work, and after a year or two of study and preparation, they went out from the college and took up the lines of work they had determined to follow. Those who had gone out from the sheltering care of their Alma Mater in the army days were delighted to get back at commencement time for the first few years after the war. The world was new and fresh for them, the period of the war an ugly dream, and they came back, as though they had been absent a day or two, with all the old college fervor and spirit strong within them."

The role that Lawrence played in the war was looked back upon and tributes were written at the semicentennial celebration in 1897 and printed in the alumni directories in 1905 and 1915 – President Samuel Plantz (1894-1924) had a particular interest in commemorating Lawrence's role in the Civil War. These sources are where much of the information for today's talk has come from, since we have relatively few contemporary records from the war years.



Questions?