



## FINDING RICHMOND'S CIVIL WAR SITES

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As part of VHC's Civil War Sites Project, I spent several weeks researching Richmond, a Chittenden County town of about 5,000 people.

I broke my research on Richmond down into three questions:

- Who fought? Who were the men who went to war from Richmond, and what sector of the town's population did they represent?
- What happened at home? How did the town mobilize and finance their part in the Civil War?
- What were the stories and places that could make the Richmond's Civil War history come to life?

### WHO FOUGHT?

I began with the website [www.vermontcivilwar.org](http://www.vermontcivilwar.org), which has a database of Civil War soldiers searchable by individual, or by town. This database includes Theodore S. Peck's Revised Roster of Vermont Volunteers, a resource that includes all enlisted Vermont soldiers. Peck's Roster is available at most public libraries and at the Vermont Historical Society.

However, identifying a town's soldiers by place of enlistment is not always accurate. Soldiers commonly enlisted outside of their hometowns for a variety of reasons. Enlistment bounties varied from town to town, soldiers wished to fight alongside friends or under a certain commander, or they moved for other reasons. In George Granville Benedict's *Vermont in the Civil War: A History*, I found that the "Richmond Company," Company F of the 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment, was organized in Richmond on October 10, 1862, including men from Jericho, Underhill, Essex, St. George, Bolton, Williston,

Huntington, Starksboro, and Richmond.<sup>1</sup> This alone could be a good reason for complicated enlistment records, as many of these area men may have signed up in Richmond.

At [www.vermontcivilwar.org](http://www.vermontcivilwar.org), compilers have added to the list soldiers who didn't enlist there, but were born in Richmond, lived there after the war, or were buried there. This list included a total of 141 Richmond men, 117 of who enlisted in Richmond. Of those credited to Richmond, only 7 were listed as born there, 9 were born elsewhere, and 104 were unknown. Of the 26 men who did not enlist in Richmond, 9 were born in Richmond, and most enlisted in the nearby towns of Williston, Jericho, Bolton, and Middlesex.

I took my list of the 117 soldiers who enlisted in Richmond, and looked them up in the U.S. census. While census records are available in most libraries, I was able to access searchable census records online at [www.heritagequest.com](http://www.heritagequest.com), by accessing it from my public library's website and typing in my library card's barcode. Other online census sources, such as Ancestry.com, or Footnote.com, are available for a fee. Using HeritageQuest, I was able to search for individuals by first and last name, or browse by county or year. Census records usually show an individual's age, place of birth, occupation, and occasionally their education level, value of their personal property, and the members of their household. Of course, census records are also an imperfect resource. I looked up each soldier by name in multiple years. Of the 117 men I searched for, I was only able to conclusively identify 47 as living in Richmond in 1860 or 1870. While I found a few names in other towns, most were simply absent, or had names so common that it was impossible to identify them correctly.<sup>2</sup>

Of the 47, I found that 36 had been born in the United States, 9 born in Canada, and 5 born elsewhere, mostly in England, Scotland, or Ireland. Of the 9 born in Canada, none owned their own farms. 6 worked as laborers on other farms, and 3 were tradesmen. Of immigrants from Europe, however, 3 owned their own farms, while 2 worked as laborers. Of those born in the United States, 15 owned farms, and 9 worked as farm laborers. 8 were tradesmen, and 4 professionals. While this data suggests that Canadian immigrants were less likely to be landed farmers, their U.S. born neighbors also worked as farm laborers. In just this small sample, data suggests that soldiers in Richmond were not exclusively from a particular social class, but men from a broad variety of professions.<sup>3</sup> I speculate that immigrants and farm laborers were less likely to be counted in the census, due to their transient

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict, George Grenville. *Vermont in the Civil War: A History*. Burlington: The Free Press Association, 1888, 400.

<sup>2</sup> Identifying more men is possible, but it was beyond the scope of my research to begin working with vital records and church records.

<sup>3</sup> This is an interesting contrast to Grant Reynold's study of soldiers in Tinmouth. Grant found that in Tinmouth, no farm owners went to war, only farm laborers.

work, and so many of the enlisted men who I was unable to identify may have been laborers, rather than prosperous farmers.

According to the 1860 census, Richmond was a town of 1400 residents, 476 of who were white men with a listed occupation. Of these, 19% were born in Canada, and about 18% were born in England, Ireland, or Scotland. 28% were farmers, 30% farm or day laborers, 3% professionals or clergy, 14% servants, and 25% tradespersons or merchants. While most domestic servants were Irish, most farm laborers were Canadian. No farm owners were Canadian, but a few Irish, Scottish, and English immigrants owned farms.

Do these proportions mirror those who went to war from the area? The proportion of English, Scottish and Irish immigrants who enlisted seems a little lower than in the town as a whole, and the proportion of farm owners who enlisted is a little higher. With such a small sample, and due to so many unknowns, it's hard to come to any concrete conclusions about the demographics of who went to war. While laborers were probably more likely to have gone to war, no profession or group of men seemed to be fully exempt from service.

## **WHAT HAPPENED AT HOME?**

My research into life on the home front focused on group efforts at home to support the war, and the town's civic life. The first two places I looked were newspaper archives, and town records. I began with the Vermont Newspaper Project Catalog, a database of the locations of the state's many newspapers, online at <http://vtnp.uvm.edu>. According to the database, there was no local paper in Richmond during the Civil War other than the Burlington Free Press. I browsed from 1860 to 1866 in the archives of the Burlington Free Press, available on microfilm at the University of Vermont library, and the Vermont Department of Libraries in Montpelier. Often, newspapers mentioned the meetings of women to make necessities, parades, large funerals, and other events. For Richmond, I found the following:

RICHMOND MOVING, - On Thursday evening last a spirited meeting was held in Richmond, to form an independent Light Infantry. Short and pithy speeches were made, and *thirty men* gave in their names on the post for the new company; and E. J. Mason, E. B. Andrews, and G. M. Flagg were appointed to further the object. Richmond has a company to be proud of. - *Burlington Free Press, April 29, 1861*

The paper also listed notices of similar meetings in Huntington, Shelburne, and other Chittenden county towns. Though I found reports of women meeting to sew uniforms and necessities in neighboring towns, I was unable to find any mention of women's war efforts in Richmond.

At the Town Clerk's office, I searched town meeting records and found in the town meeting minutes the record of Richmond's wartime finances. At the time that Company F was organized in Richmond, in September 1862, the town agreed to pay \$100 to each volunteer. In December 1862, the town voted against paying drafted soldiers an equivalent to volunteers. In September 1863, a petition was raised by six people, again to see if the soldiers drafted in September 1862 would be paid. Again, Richmond voted no. In December 1863, however, Richmond did increase its bounty for enlisted men to \$300. In July 1864, Richmond voted to pay each reenlisting veteran \$300, to be paid to their dependents should they die in the war. In December 1864, Richmond appointed a "furnishing agent" to assure that the town would achieve its quota. Finally, in March of 1867, Richmond voted to levy a tax on the town to pay bounties to "any or all soldiers who served as such, in the late war, and were credited on the quota of the town."

Was Richmond's story typical? Bounties paid by Vermont towns during the war were typically between \$25 and \$75 in 1862, \$100 and \$350 in 1863, and at their highest in 1864, ranging from \$500 to \$1,000.<sup>4</sup> While some towns never offered bounties to their soldiers, Richmond did offer typical amounts, and even succeeded in finally compensating soldiers who were drafted. In this, they went above and beyond many other towns. However, it is clear that the process of leveraging this support for the war was a contentious process, even when many of the sons of the selectmen in those meetings were serving at the time.

## **CIVIL WAR PEOPLE AND PLACES**

To find the stories of individual soldiers, I looked for regimental histories, which often include reminiscences and profiles of soldiers. In Ralph Orson Sturtevant's *Pictorial History, Thirteenth Regiment, Vermont Volunteers, War of 1861-1865*, available at UVM Special Collections and likely elsewhere, I was able to learn more about the individuals who served from Richmond. Men who enlisted in the "Richmond Company" of the 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment took part in only one major battle, Gettysburg, where they were instrumental in the repulsion of Pickett's Charge.<sup>5</sup> Sturtevant's history also includes the story of Henry C. Russell, who died at Gettysburg on July 2, 1863, "in the famous charge of the Second Vermont Brigade against General Pickett's right flank."<sup>6</sup> Russell was buried on the field by members of his company. After the company was mustered out, Russell's friend Amos Brown, a private in the same company, returned to Gettysburg and brought his body home to Richmond. With the help of Civil War Historian Howard Coffin, I went to the

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<sup>4</sup> Hamilton Child, in "Gazetteer and Business Directory of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties," 1882. Available: <http://vermontcivilwar.org/state/bounties.php>

<sup>5</sup> Sturtevant, *Pictorial History, Thirteenth Regiment*, 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> Sturtevant, 563.

cemetery in Richmond to try to find Russell's grave. Civil War gravestones in a crowded cemetery will often be marble, and may have a flag or rusty G.A.R. star planted next to the headstone. A pocket mirror or spray bottle of water can help identify hard to read text. We could not find Russell's name among the stones marked with a star and flag, but did find a headstone whose lettering had worn away, directly next to the stone of another Russell, who was alive during the Civil War period. Going back to the Town Clerk's office, we consulted the grave registry, finding that we had correctly identified Russell's wife's stone, and that the worn away stone was most likely his. [www.vermontcivilwar.org](http://www.vermontcivilwar.org) also includes a searchable cemetery database, in which Russell is listed.

Another soldier that Sturtevant included was Arnold C. Fay. His father, Nathan Fay, was a selectman in Richmond during the war. Arnold Fay grew up on the farm at Fay's Corners. To find Fay's house, I consulted the 1870 Beers Atlas, available at most public libraries, or available on a CD-ROM from [www.old-maps.com/vermont](http://www.old-maps.com/vermont). The Beers Atlas lists the last name of the homeowner next to each house in its detailed town maps. On the Richmond map, I identified a Fay house and its precise location at Fay's Corners. I drove to Fay's Corners and identified that the house still stands. Arnold C. Fay initially enlisted in Company F of the 13<sup>th</sup> Regiment, and after being mustered out, enlisted again in Company K of the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment, where he participated in the charge on Fort Malone, which led the 17<sup>th</sup> Regiment into Richmond, VA. After he mustered out in 1865, he eventually settled in Milton, served as a state legislator in 1890, and was the commander of a GAR post in 1904, a life of civic engagement common for Vermont's Civil War veterans.

Sturtevant also included an account of the forming of Company F at Richmond, on September 10, 1862:

"A hundred boys brought together from the farms, stores and shops of Chittenden County, all full of fun and frolic made Richmond a pretty lively place during our stay there. Yet I don't believe there was a low, dirty or mean act committed, just simply boyish frolics"<sup>7</sup>

There is little left of the Richmond that witnessed this day. I consulted town histories for the location of prominent buildings, and any downtown fires. I found that while the soldiers were offered free lodging at Ransom's Hotel, the hotel no longer stands. Nor do many of Richmond's main blocks, which were rebuilt after multiple fires. Soldiers drilled on a field near the river before they left, but there seems to be no way to find out where. A recreation field near the river was labeled "Volunteers Green." Though that name sounds promisingly Civil War era, but my inquiry to a member of the Historical Society revealed that the field was named in 1976. We know that the regiment left Richmond by train, and the train tracks

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<sup>7</sup> Sturtevant, 565.

remain, running through the center of town. Richmond held its town meetings in the Old Round Church, a multi-denominational place of worship and town hall, and that building still stands and serves community uses to this day.

I wasn't able to find out everything about Richmond's Civil War history, but I found out enough to create a compelling picture of the town during Civil War days – 101 men converging on Richmond and boarding trains to take them to war, contentious meetings held at the Round Church, still standing as a community site, and a tragedy at Gettysburg, one of only two combat deaths in Company F, that a young friend felt compelled to bring home to the cemetery at the center of town. Many of my discoveries required more than one source, but most of these sources are easily accessible, and brought me rather quickly to the events, and places, of Vermont in the 1860s. Before I began, Howard assured me that Richmond was one of the more challenging towns. If what I found is any measure, there is a vast amount of Civil War history in Vermont, still undiscovered.

## **SOURCES I USED**

**Vermontcivilwar.org** – Peck's roster of enlisted soldiers, cemetery database, background information.

**Heritagequest** – Searchable database of the U.S. census, available through most public libraries.

**George Granville Benedict's *History of Vermont in the Civil War*** – background information on regiments and where they served.

**Burlington Free Press Archives** – reports of town-wide meetings and women's group meetings.

**Town records** – Enlistment meetings, debates over bounties, vital records, burial records.

**Beers Atlas** – Locations of 1860s era families and houses.

**Regimental Histories** – I used Ralph Orson Sturtevant's *Pictorial History, Thirteenth Regiment, Vermont Volunteers, War of 1861-1865*. Regimental histories are available for many of Vermont's regiments.

**Local Histories** – I used the recently published book, *Richmond, Vermont – A History of More than 200 Years*, to verify downtown fires and locations of relevant buildings. Though it had no specific Civil War content, many local histories do.