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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**NORWICH UNIVERSITY:
CITIZEN SOLDIERS IN THE CIVIL WAR**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: NORWICH UNIVERSITY: CITIZEN SOLDIERS IN THE CIVIL WAR

Author: Major Shawn J. Coakley, U.S. Marine Corps

Thesis: This essay concludes that a properly trained “citizen-soldier” is a formidable force, and valuable both on and off the battlefield.

Discussion: The citizen-soldier ideal was the driving force behind Alden Partridge’s educational experiment. He wanted officers who would be “identified in views, in feelings, and in interest, with the great body of the community,” and a college that would reconcile the efficiency and discipline demanded by a regular army with the republican values and popular sentiments inherent in the militia system. Norwich University provided the Union Army a vehicle by which volunteer officers could be trained to lead and fight. This paper examines the contributions of Norwich University and its graduates to the Union Army during the Civil War to determine the extent to which Partridge’s system of education may have contributed to their success.

Conclusion: Alden Partridge’s unique system of education did an exemplary job of training and preparing citizens to execute the responsibilities of soldiers. The most serious deficiency in the American militia system was the failure to prepare militia officers for their responsibilities. In order to remedy that deficiency, Partridge revolutionized the system of education in America at the time. Partridge’s curriculum was based on the notion that the best system of education was one that would prepare youth “to discharge in the best possible manner, the duties they owe to themselves, to their fellow men, and to their country.” His plan for combining military and civil education was highly innovative and remarkably farsighted. His foresight is easily seen in the extremely important part that ROTC plays in our present system of education and in the modern army.

Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
DISCLAIMER	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER 2: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION	8
CHAPTER 3: CIVIL WAR PREPARATION	13
CHAPTER 4: CIVIL WAR PARTICIPATION	16
CHAPTER 5: CITIZEN SOLDIERS	22
CHAPTER 6: MERITS OF A CITIZEN SOLDIER	36
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION	39
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The concept of the citizen-soldier is deeply rooted in American experience. It is a product of the early political development of the country and is closely associated with the principle of decentralized power and civilian control of the military. In the case of the citizen army, this principle was expressed in the militia system, derived from colonial origins and written into law in 1792. That early law, sometimes called the “Infamous Militia Act” by military analysts, made all free white male citizens between eighteen and forty-eight liable for military obligation. Calls into federal service, however, were limited to specific conditions enumerated in the Constitution. Training, discipline, and inspections were left to the local government. In the period leading up to the Civil War, Norwich University provided the Union Army a vehicle by which volunteer officers could be trained to lead and fight. The Civil War stands as the greatest example to date as to the usefulness of a well led and properly trained volunteer force.

The desire to provide professionally trained officers for the militia motivated the establishment of the first non-professional military college, in many ways the grandfather of all ROTC programs that followed. This was the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy (now Norwich University), and its mission was to provide officers for the national defense who would be “identified in views, in feelings, and in interests, with the great body of the community.”¹ The college’s founder was looking to harmonize the popular support and allegiances of the militia system with the training and discipline of an efficient army.

¹ Munro McCloskey, *Reserve Officers Training Corps’ campus pathways to service commissions*, (New York, Richards Rosen Press, 1965), p 16.

Alden Partridge pioneered military education in the United States. As a West Point graduate, instructor, and superintendent, he contributed to the early development of the United States Military Academy and proposed establishing similar institutions within all regions of the country. “Partridge advocated reliance on the militia as the best means for defending the nation from invasion and citizens from governmental power.”²

In 1817 Captain Partridge was convicted of insubordination and resigned from the army. He founded the American Literary, Scientific & Military Academy at Norwich, Vermont in 1819, which relocated to Middletown, Connecticut in 1825. In 1829 he moved his institution back to Norwich, Vermont and in 1834 received a charter from the state, which changed the name to Norwich University. In the late 1860’s, Norwich relocated to its present location in Northfield, Vermont, due to a fire that destroyed the main building.

The nation’s first private military school trained students for civilian careers under a military format. Partridge emphasized the practical application of mathematics and the sciences as alternatives to sectarian and classical studies. He innovated practices such as an elective studies system, flexible enrollment periods, physical education and supplementary vocational and military training. The school attracted students from all over the nation. Surprisingly, southerners made up about one third of the student body.

Alden Partridge always advocated increased opportunities for military education in the United States. Although some of his critics accused him of being preoccupied with control at West Point, his ideas on education ranged far beyond West Point. He envisioned identical training for career officers and for young men who wanted military

² Dean Paul Baker, *The Partridge Connection: Alden Partridge and southern Military Education*, Bound copy found in Norwich University Library. (Chapel Hill, N.C., University of North Carolina, 1986), p iii.

training and a civilian career. He made the argument that civilians could help deal with an invasion by any professional army, and based his theory on the growing belief that the Nation's best defense was its own population. Although reserve forces figured in almost all plans for the national defense, the idea of training a reserve officer corps ran into stiff opposition within the regular army and the War Department.

The American, Literary, Scientific, & Military Academy's curriculum embraced numerous branches of literature, science, practical instruction and, of course, military science. Partridge claims to have gotten the inspiration for his unique combination of military and civilian curriculum from The Constitution. He praised The Constitution's virtue of using all citizens as a force to protect their own interests and as a safeguard against elitist control and tyranny. The relevance of his activities to this constitutional provision lay in a method for preparing the public to defend themselves. Speaking of the system of citizen soldiery he observed, "in order that this constitutional force should answer the purposes for which it was originally instituted, it must be properly organized, and duly instructed in the elements, at least, of military science and tactics. Hence arises the necessity, in our country, of an extended system of military education, and of general diffusion of military knowledge."³ This was the beginning of an alternate form of education that appealed to many Americans, but created a controversy in military circles as to the importance of training a non-professional soldier, a "Citizen-Soldier." This debate would last for many years and was put to the test during the Civil War.

³ Dean Paul Baker, *The Partridge Connection: Alden Partridge and Southern Military Education*, Bound copy found in Norwich University Library, (Chapel Hill, N.C., University of North Carolina, 1986), p 138.

Chapter 2

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Alden Partridge considered the traditional curriculum for higher education inadequate for the needs of a rapidly growing country. He believed that education should become more practical, scientific, and truly liberal. The classical curriculum should be expanded to include modern languages, history, and political science as well as agriculture, economics, and engineering. All of these branches of learning, along with military science and physical education, were incorporated into Partridge's "American System of Education"⁴, which was part of a plan that he briefed to Congress in 1841.

Partridge's philosophy of education was undoubtedly derived from his personal education at Dartmouth and West Point, and was calculated to remedy certain deficiencies that he and others had already noticed in our American colleges and higher seminaries of learning. His views, both of the deficiencies and their remedies, were set forth in a lecture delivered in 1819, which was subsequently published throughout the country. After defining "education in its most perfect state to be the preparing of youth in the best possible manner for the correct discharge of the duties of any station in which he may be placed," he went on to say:

I will observe what is doubtless a well known fact, that there are many individuals at the present time who believe, I trust conscientiously, that the time is very near when wars and fighting will cease, and that consequently military preparations and the cultivation of military science are unnecessary and ought likewise to cease. That such a time will come I, perhaps, as firmly believe as any individual whatever; but that this period is so near as is by some supposed, does not appear

⁴ Gary Lord, *Alden Partridge: Advocate of The Citizen-Soldier and Spiritual Father of ROTC*. presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Military Institute. (Virginia Military institute, Lexington, Virginia, 14 April 1989).

to me to be probable. A comparison of the events predicted in the Prophecies and Revelations with those which have transpired in the world as recorded in history, force upon my mind a conviction that mankind is doomed to suffer the evils of war and bloodshed, and that consequently that state which intends to maintain its independence, free from the encroachments of avarice and ambition, must be prepared to repel force by force.⁵

After returning to Vermont Alden Partridge became obsessed with the idea that the United States, with a small standing army, needed an institution to supply young men with complete military training, in connection with technical education. To do this he established a new academy. The prospectus of the institution indicated that:

Everything in the internal regulations of the academy is calculated to establish the cadet in habits of regularity and order, to inure him to the hardships of active life, and to give him a practical knowledge of the several sciences to which his attention is called. In these things consists its principal superiority over the other literary institutions of our country, in which the students acquire but little practical information, contract habits of bodily inactivity, and lose their health, and destroy their usefulness.⁶

The first year the faculty of the American Literary, Scientific and Military Academy was composed of Captain Alden Partridge, A.M., superintendent and professor of mathematics, philosophy and military science; George P. Marsh, A.B. (who afterwards became famous as a statesman, diplomat and philologist), professor of languages; Rev. Rufus W. Bailey, A.M., chaplain and professor of ethics; E.B. Williston, professor of English; John M. Partridge (Alden Partridge's brother), professor of practical geometry, topography and acting sword master.

The following extract from the prospectus shows that the college's course of study compared favorably with other colleges of that time while also giving special attention to military subjects:

⁵ N.L. Sheldon, *Norwich University*, (Norwich University, Northfield, VT, 1899.), p 3-4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p 4.

The Law of Nations; Military Law; the Constitution of the United States, and of the States severally; metaphysics; Agriculture; Permanent and Field Fortification, Field Engineering, generally; the construction of Marine Batteries; Artillery duty; the principles of Gunnery; a complete course of Military Tactics; the attack and defence of fortified places; the Ancient Tactics, particularly those of the Greeks and Romans, with a description of the organization and discipline of the phalanx and legion; Fencing; Military Drawing; Topography; Civil Engineering, including the construction of roads, canals, locks and bridges and architecture. Three courses of public military lectures are annually given at this institution by the superintendent, and on the course of Botany, Mineralogy and Chemistry, by the professor in that department. ... The cadets are required to dress in uniform.⁷

No specific time for completing the course was required, but each student was allowed to advance as rapidly as possible. It usually took anywhere from one to six years to graduate and receive a diploma from the academy. The first class entered September 4, 1820, and numbered one hundred students. The academy soon became very popular and its halls were filled with the sons of some of the most prominent families in the country. The attendance for 1821-1822 was increased and several members were added to the faculty. "The roster at this period shows enrollments from all parts of the country, many from the south, one hundred and fifty coming from South Carolina alone; and thus the sturdy sons of New England touched elbows with the budding chivalry of the South."⁸ The attendance and growing popularity of the academy suggests that the military and scientific element, together with an optional or elective course of study and a term of residence limited by the ability of the student to complete the course, filled a need that was not provided for in other colleges at that time.

One of the characteristic features of Alden Partridge's system of instruction and discipline were the military marches, which were conducted for scientific and fitness

⁷ N.L. Sheldon, *Norwich University*, (Norwich University, Northfield, VT, 1899.), p 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p 5-6.

purposes under his personal command or in his company. “A journal of an excursion by the Corps of Cadets, by Joseph Dana Allen, ’25, who afterwards became a famous civil engineer, tells of a march made from Norwich to Ticonderoga, Burlington, and back. In December 1826, a detachment of cadets marched to Poughkeepsie, where they took a boat for West Point, and engaged in a competitive drill with the cadets of the National Academy. They then proceeded by way of New York City, Philadelphia and Baltimore to Washington, where President John Quincy Adams reviewed them.”⁹

Anyone who read a catalog of the academy’s early years could not miss the heavy emphasis on regulating student conduct. The superintendent, Alden Partridge, prescribed details for every part of cadet life, from required uniforms to rules on bathing. He expanded upon the dozens of printed regulations with a steady flow of “military orders” issued at daily roll call. The professed mission of the academy to educate within a militaristic environment narrowed the characteristics of its students. The academy drew an all-male clientele attracted to the lifestyle and values symbolized by a military uniform. Partridge’s rhetoric emphasized the importance of physical strength and endurance. By offering military studies he clearly encouraged the mastery of fighting skills. Cadets learned methods to control group violence, most likely for the purpose of defending national and state interests. One of the schools many criticisms was, “how could a school which taught the art of violence control the phenomenon within its own ranks?”¹⁰

Alden Partridge kept a tight rein on his academy. The personal accountability for behavior and clear lines of authority under a military system concentrated power in his

⁹ N.L. Sheldon, *Norwich University*, (Norwich University, Northfield, VT, 1899.), p 6.

¹⁰ Dean Paul Baker, *The Partridge Connection: Alden Partridge and Southern Military Education*, Bound copy found in Norwich University Library, (Chapel Hill, N.C., University of North Carolina, 1986), p 251.

hands. It seems likely that his method of handling students was responsible for the college's ability to avoid the rebelliousness seen in other institutions of that time. Partridge was an authoritarian capable and willing to use his power. He quickly removed individuals who challenged him, but his success was not based on brute force alone. He demonstrated to students that he genuinely cared for their individual welfare and led them more often through persuasion than coercion. The academy enjoyed a public reputation for controlling student conduct that was far better than civilian academies.¹¹

The Academy specialized in providing for the needs of the military, but the military organization and the values found in such an environment offered a little something for everyone. The importance of having civilians who were well versed in military matters and understood the role of the military in executing national policy could only help to strengthen a young and rapidly growing country. Founded and operated by a man who once ran West Point, this private academy found its place in training militia and naval officers. Its greatest contribution, however, was in training boys destined for civilian careers. It was not so much the curriculum as it was the military organization and the values summarized in a military environment that attracted students.

¹¹ Dean Paul Baker, *The Partridge Connection: Alden Partridge and Southern Military Education*, Bound copy found in Norwich University Library, (Chapel Hill, N.C., University of North Carolina, 1986), p 251.

Chapter 3

CIVIL WAR PREPARATION

In 1834 Partridge obtained a charter from the state of Vermont, which changed the name of the school to Norwich University, and granted it full power to give degrees and the possession of all other powers and immunities belonging to other colleges and universities in the country. A characteristic and peculiar feature of its charter requires “a course of military instruction, both theoretical and practical, and also of civil engineering and the practical sciences generally.”¹² The University went into operation in May of 1835 and became the first scientific and classical, as well as the first military collegiate institution in the United States. Its success was immediate, and every state in the Union had, in its early days, representatives among its students.

Starting in the early 1850’s the cadets, rotated through a variety of cadet ranks and positions of varying responsibility. These positions included officers, non-commissioned officers, officers of the guard, officers of the day and commandants of parade. “The only regular cadet officer was the adjutant, whose duties were little different from those of a first sergeant, and who fell into ranks with a rifle like any private at all drills. He called the rolls, marched the battalion to meals and church, made frequent inspections of quarters and grounds, read the reports of the officer of the day as well as his own at morning parade for prayers, and performed certain clerical duties required by the president. Two adjutants were usually appointed annually, one holding office from the beginning of the college year to the middle, and the other from the middle of the year

¹² N.L. Sheldon, *Norwich University*, (Norwich University, Northfield, VT, 1899.), p 6.

to commencement.”¹³

The military instruction consisted of artillery and infantry drills as well as a large emphasis on fencing. On the walls of nearly every room were grouped foils, wooden cutlasses and fencing poles. Small sword, saber and bayonet fencing was an important part of the winter drills and played a very interesting role in the annual commencement exercises.¹⁴

Strict military discipline was maintained. The immediate supervision of discipline and all matters pertaining to order was the responsibility of the officer of the barracks, who had quarters in the barracks. He was assisted in the preservation of order by the cadet adjutant. A short drill was performed before breakfast and the regular drill hour extended from 4 to 5 p.m. Captain John M. Stanyan, '50, in a letter written in 1896, states:

Drills, ---who can forget the loading of a musket in seventeen movements? General Jackman would sometimes drill us almost beyond our endurance, so interested would he become. We soon found that if we were at shoulder arms, a slight dropping of the gun butts from the hips would attract his attention and he would command, 'Order Arms Rest,'—with an apology.¹⁵

In November 1850, the state legislature of Vermont voted to loan Norwich University two field pieces. The guns were taken to the University in the summer of 1851. Dunbar Ransom, '51, who had been for some time a cadet at the United States Military Academy, took charge of the artillery drill. In November 1852, the state of Vermont loaned two cannons, heavier than the ones issued to the University in 1851, and in the summer of 1853 they were taken to the University and incorporated into the

¹³ William A. Ellis, *Norwich University: Her History, Her Graduates, Her Roll of Honor Vol I*, (Concord, New Hampshire, 1898), p117.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p 118.

artillery drill.¹⁶

During this same period of the 1850's the cadets made several marches. General Dodge gives the following account of the marches made during the time he was a cadet:

The trips made during my attendance at the University were—first, to St. Johnsbury, Vt. We visited the Fairbanks scale works and on our return to Norwich, we reached Thetford on Sunday, and camped on the common. A protest was made against our camping there by the ministers, as it would interfere with the services of the church fronting the common. Our commanding officer refused to remove the camp and there were no services held in the church. A large crowd of people visited us.

We made our next trip to Fort Ticonderoga. We marched up the White River, via Montpelier to St. Albans, and from there took the boat to the fort. We returned to Burlington by boat and marched back to Norwich via Montpelier. We were under the command of our adjutant, S.N. Fifield.

The Engineering corps made several trips to different towns and surveyed them. We surveyed White River Junction, Hartford, Woodstock, Thetford, and Windsor. I have among my papers my plans of some of those surveys. We used the compass generally and took the measurements and directions of the roads and put on the maps every house and every farm, the streams, topography, etc. This was for the field work of the class. We also laid out a line of railroad. I think it was on one of the streams near Northfield, about three or four miles long, to give the engineering class the use of instrument. There is where I learned the use of the level and transit and compass so that I was competent to take these instruments in the field.¹⁷

In 1860, the country was changing and war seemed to be inevitable. With

Increased threats of secession by the South, the Norwich University cadets began to realize that their training at the University might be of service to the Country; that the hours spent in drill and the study of tactics were not wasted. As the war grew closer, the excitement increased among the cadets and discussions on the war could not be kept out of the classroom. Every class opened and closed with discussions on secession and possible war. The drills were executed with new energy, and more time was spent in the study of tactics and strategy.

¹⁶William A. Ellis, *Norwich University: Her History, Her Graduates, Her Roll of Honor Vol I*, (Concord, New Hampshire, 1898), p 119.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p 120.

Chapter 4

CIVIL WAR PARTICIPATION

When hostilities broke out in April 1861, there was great excitement at Norwich University. The cadets left in large numbers for the war. Many were appointed drill-masters for the volunteers in Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts and other states. A select number of Norwich Cadets were detailed to serve as drillmasters for newly mustered Vermont units and their recruits, as well as student recruits at area colleges. “Between April and May 1861, Norwich cadets drilled three companies of students at Dartmouth, a 102-man company at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, and 63 students in a company at what is now Colby College in Waterville, Maine. Additional Dartmouth companies were drilled over the course of the war upon request.”¹⁸ In April 1862, Instructor Samuel W. Shattuck, '60, who was a sergeant major in the Sixth Massachusetts Infantry, was ordered to join his regiment for service at Washington, D.C. He was escorted to White River Junction by the corps, which at the time numbered fifty-seven; of this number forty-five, within two years, served in the field with rank from lieutenant to colonel.¹⁹ The patriotism that the Norwich experience instilled in its cadets is more than evident, and as we will see it lasts long after they leave.

A number of men went to Norwich during 1861-1863 to receive instruction in drill and tactics, for periods ranging from two weeks to several months. They were not regularly enrolled as cadets and no record, unfortunately, has been preserved of these men. The catalogue published in November 1861, states that sixty men, not cadets,

¹⁸ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 153.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p 15.

completed a course in tactics. Research suggests that several of those men gained distinction in the war.²⁰

Alonzo Jackman, '36, brigadier general in the Vermont militia, was one of the first in the state to offer his services. Governor Fairbanks begged him to remain at Norwich University, and assist in drilling and organizing the state troops. He reluctantly consented, at a great sacrifice of personal ambition, as he could have received a Colonel's commission. He was put in charge of drilling the state troops. The First Regiment was selected and drilled by him, assisted by his cadets. From 1861-1863 a large number of the cadets were appointed state drill masters by the governor, with the rank of 1st Lieutenant. Many alumni and past cadets who were unable to enlist due to age or disability, performed valuable work as drillmasters.²¹ The cadre of cadets from Norwich University, and the instruction they gave are at least partially responsible for the outstanding reputation of the Vermont regiments.

In the spring of 1862 a volunteer cavalry company was organized and composed of students from Norwich and Dartmouth University. This unit was officially known as Company B, 7th Squadron, Rhode Island Cavalry, but eventually became known as the "College Cavaliers." The College Cavaliers, a 90-day volunteer unit, have the distinction of being the only known unit of its kind during the Civil War, a company formed solely of college students who returned to their respective campuses when their tour was done. In the siege of Harpers Ferry in 1862 the College Cavaliers were part of the only Union unit to break out of the Confederate encirclement. Rather than face capture and captivity, the cadets joined a column of 1300 Federal horseman led by Col. Benjamin

²⁰ William A. Ellis, *Norwich University: Her History, Her Graduates, Her Roll of Honor Vol I*, (Concord, New Hampshire, 1898), p 138.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p 405.

Franklin “Grimes” Davis of the 8th New York cavalry. This unit was able to evade General Longstreet’s forces and reach Pennsylvania without the loss of a single man. While passing through enemy lines under the cover of darkness, they managed to capture Longstreet’s 40-wagon reserve ordnance train and turn it over to Federal authorities. Due to the Antietam emergency, the cadets volunteered to extend their service beyond that of their initial enlistment. Cadet Arthur W. Coombs, ’64, was the only cadet lost during their tour of duty, dying of dysentery. Two other cadets were captured by the Confederates and held at Libby prison in Richmond, but were quickly released.²²

In Connecticut, General W.H. Russell, ’28, rendered valuable aid to the state as major general in command of the state militia. General E.W.N. Starr, ’28, unable to accept the commission as colonel of the 4th Regiment because of poor health, proved valuable in instructing troops.²³

In Wisconsin, the cadets were especially prominent in the state service. George E. Bryant, ’55, then captain of Co. E., 1st Regiment of the state militia, was the first officer to volunteer for service, and his company was the first organization to offer its services to the United States. Judge Luther S. Dixon, ’48, chief justice of the State Supreme Court, offered his service to the governor, but was requested to remain at his post, as his services were needed more on the bench. The judge and his classmate Stillman E. Dana, ’49, did provide valuable assistance in drilling state volunteers.²⁴

Fifty-two of the graduates and past cadets gave their lives in the service of the United States during the Civil War. Norwich alumni served on nearly every battlefield

²² Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 158-159.

²³ William A. Ellis, *Norwich University: Her History, Her Graduates, Her Roll of Honor Vol I*, (Concord, New Hampshire, 1898), p 405.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p 407.

with honor and distinction. James H. Ward, '23, Captain, U.S.N., was the first naval officer and the first Norwich cadet to die in the service of the country. Robert E. Hitchcock, '59, was the first Vermonter to sacrifice his life at the first battle of Bull Run, while commanding a company of Marines.²⁵

Forty of the alumni served in the Confederate Army. Complete records of the men who served the South have not been kept. In all probability a much larger number of the alumni entered the Confederate service.²⁶ Although not looked upon favorably by the United States, no one can overlook the fact that these men fought bravely and in the true meaning of the citizen-soldier, in defense of their strong political beliefs and their deep ties to the South.

In many instances classmates and Norwich University acquaintances met while on opposite sides of the battle.

Otis M. Marsh, '42, a major in the Texas cavalry C.S.A., captured the *Harriet Lane*, and among the prisoners was Julius R. Richardson, '61, paymaster, U.S.N. Captain Henry J. Hartstene, C.S.N., '28, captured John W. Dicks, '23, while commanding the *Isaac Smith*. General T.E.G. Ransom, '51, captured a large number of prisoners at the battle of Fort Donelson; among the number was his old Norwich associate, Colonel Stanley M. Warner, '48.²⁷

The distance between Vermont and the war gave the people of Vermont a sense of security and instilled in them the belief that invasion was impossible. On 19 October 1864, a band of Confederate soldiers, who came secretly from Canada, successfully looted the town of St. Albans and escaped to Canada with over \$208,000. There were no organized militia left in the state and the only source of organized defense was the corps of cadets at Norwich University. Rumors spread throughout the state that a large number

²⁵ William A. Ellis, *Norwich University: Her History, Her Graduates, Her Roll of Honor Vol I*, (Concord, New Hampshire, 1898), p 408.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p 409.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

of Confederates were collecting along the Canadian border and were about to invade the state.

Governor Smith telegraphed General Jackman at Norwich to enlist the aid of the Norwich University Corps of Cadets. In the fall darkness, drums beat an urgent call for an unusual evening assembly and the cadets quickly formed into ranks in front of their military instructor, Union army veteran Captain Charles N. Kent, '64. Kent described what happened next: "When the ranks were aligned, [I] read the telegram, requesting all those of the cadets who would volunteer to go to Newport, if called by the governor, to step one pace to the front. There was a complete forward movement in response. Every cadet thus expressed his wish to volunteer."²⁸

Forming in front of their barracks, fully uniformed and equipped with their newly issued Springfield muskets, the cadets awaited command to move out. Soon, under the command of General Jackman and Captain Kent, a full "combat ready" company of 47 cadets was on a train headed north for Newport; the "Lake Memphremagog Campaign" had begun and the cadets were going to war!²⁹

The reports of a steamer that was filled with Rebel raiders and about to arrive from Canada created lots of excitement and gave the impression that the cadets had arrived just in time. Reinforced by a motley group of armed townspeople, the cadets formed on the wharf. A cadet who took part in the expedition recalled how

our line of battle was formed, the Cadets being on the left and the militia on the right. The efficiency of the latter was somewhat impaired by their standing in files five or six deep. The rear rank had a strange charm for many of them. As the boat came in an excited townsman shouted "Fire" not a shot was heard; for we knew better than to fire from 'the ready.' It was owing to good drill that no one let go in the excitement. Fortunately for the boat's passengers, no one did fire: two or three harmless looking individuals debarked from the steamer and stared in astonishment at the massed armed force before them.³⁰

²⁸ William A. Ellis, *Norwich University: Her History, Her Graduates, Her Roll of Honor Vol I*, (Concord, New Hampshire, 1898), p 417-418.

²⁹ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 161.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p 161-162.

Still expecting Confederate raiders the cadets posted guards during the night. The next morning they set out for the border. After arriving at the border, they were informed that the emergency was over and their services were no longer required. “The Norwich participation in events surrounding the St. Albans raid deserves to be remembered not for what did not occur –actual combat— but for the devotion to duty and willingness to sacrifice displayed by the young cadets”³¹

³¹Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 162.

Chapter 5

CITIZEN SOLDIERS

This military school at one time almost rivaled the National Military Academy at West Point and there many a man who afterwards became famous in the Mexican and Civil Wars first drank in the inspirations of patriotism and learned the lessons of the art of war, which enabled him, out of unorganized masses of men, to make compact companies, regiments and brigades of soldiers, to act as a single body in the great game of war.

--General William T. Sherman³²

The role of the citizen-soldier general officers in the western armies was comparable in many ways to that of West Pointers in the Army of the Potomac. Norwich men served the Republic in every major battle fought in that theater of operations. No fewer than 26 alumni served at Shiloh (Pittsburg Landing), 19 at Stone's River (Murfreesboro), 27 at Vicksburg, 20 at Chickamauga, 21 at Missionary Ridge, 23 at Chattanooga, 30 at Atlanta, 23 in Sherman's "March to the Sea", 10 at Franklin, and 11 at Nashville.³³

The most well known Norwich alumnus to serve in the Union Army was Major General Grenville M. Dodge, '51. Before completing the transcontinental railroad in 1869, Dodge was a Norwich citizen-soldier and the perfect example of what Alden Partridge saw as the goal of all Americans. Dodge began the war as an Iowa drillmaster before being sent to Washington on a special mission to obtain arms for his state. He met with President Lincoln and later was appointed colonel of the 4th Iowa volunteer Infantry. He served with great distinction and gallantry as a regimental, brigade, division, and

³² Reprint of the speech of General William T. Sherman, *The Reveille*, vol. IV, No.1 (Northfield Vermont, October, 1884), p 5.

³³ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 254.

corps commander. In the early days of the war, he shared a tent with then Captain Philip H. Sheridan. Sheridan credited Dodge with providing him critical support during a difficult period when he served as brigade quartermaster. Sheridan recalled that: “Several times I was on the verge of personal conflict with irate regimental commanders, but Colonel Dodge so sustained me before Brig. Gen. [Samuel R.] Curtis and supported me by such efficient details from his regiment – the 4th Iowa – that I shall hold him and it in great affection and lasting gratitude.”³⁴

General Grant was familiar with Dodge’s many talents and found work for him in several capacities. Under Grant’s leadership Dodge served as a field commander, railroad man, and a military intelligence officer. Dodge built up a 100-man secret service organization, upon Grant’s request, that was far more efficient and successful than McClellan’s Pinkerton men. One historian commented that Dodge’s intelligence organization “was probably the most effective secret service in the Federal army and General Grant came to rely on the information received from it. During the investment of Vicksburg many of General Dodge’s secret service men operated in the rear of that objective and furnished Grant with authentic information.”³⁵

Norwich had taught Dodge both civil and military engineering skills that he was often called upon to use. Grant thought so highly of his activities during the Chattanooga Campaign that he said this:

General Dodge, besides being a most capable soldier, was an experienced railroad builder. He had no tools to work with except those of his pioneers – axes, picks and spades. With these he was able to intrench [sic] his men and protect them against surprises by small parties of the enemy. As he had no base of supplies until the road could be completed back to Nashville, the first matter to consider after protecting his men was the getting in of food and forage from the

³⁴ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 255.

³⁵ Ibid.

surrounding country. He had his men and teams bring in all the grain they could find, or all they needed, and all the cattle for beef, and such other food as could be found...Blacksmiths were detailed and set to work making the tools necessary in railroad and bridge building. Axemen were put to work getting out timber for the bridges and cutting fuel for the locomotives and cars...General Dodge had the work assigned him finished within forty days after receiving his orders. The number of bridges to rebuild was one hundred and eighty-two, many of them over deep and wide chasms; the length of road repaired was one hundred two miles.³⁶

His engineering achievements were not the only accomplishments for which Dodge used his Norwich experiences. He was also a very successful field commander and eventually rose to command of the Sixteenth Corps in the Atlanta Campaign. General Grant specifically referred to Dodge as “an exceedingly efficient officer” and personally appealed to President Lincoln to ensure his promotion to major general in May 1864.³⁷

The Atlanta Campaign left Dodge severely wounded, but not before being cited for his gallantry. It was here that General William T. Sherman became aware of Dodge and began taking notice of his accomplishments as well as those of other Norwich men.

In his report to Sherman of the enemy’s main attack, of which his command took the majority of, General Dodge said that ‘The disparity of forces can be seen from the fact that in the charge made by my two brigades under Fuller and Mersey they took 351 prisoners, representing forty nine different regiments, eight brigades and three divisions, and brought back eight flags from the enemy.’ Dodge unabashedly attributed his success as a soldier to the training he had obtained in his cadet days at Norwich. ‘What little success I have had in life I credit to my college training. For three years I had drummed into me a daily respect for authority, obedience to orders, the discipline of my mind and actions, loyalty to an employer, patriotism toward my government and honor to the flag.’³⁸

³⁶ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 256.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

Greenville Mullen Dodge was Norwich University's finest example of a citizen-soldier. He shined in both the military and later on in the civilian sector. An expert chief engineer, who will always be remembered as the driving force in the building of the Union Pacific Railroad portion of the Transcontinental Railroad and for having Dodge City, Kansas named after him. Dodge always maintained ties to the University and was the head of the New York Alumni association for many years. Attributing most of his life's success to his Norwich experiences and training as a young man further testifies to the utility of Alden Partridge's methods and course of instruction.

Another Norwich graduate who found personal praise and admiration from both Grant and Sherman was Major General Joseph A. "Fightin' Joe" Mower, '43. He had begun the war as a captain in the United States Infantry, later commanded the 11th Missouri Infantry, served for a time as commander of the Sixteenth Corps' famed "Eagle Brigade," saw extensive service as a division commander, and eventually commanded the Twentieth Corps at the end of the war. He was wounded in action and cited for gallantry several times, but drew particular attention for breaking the Confederate lines at the Battle of Bentonville, North Carolina, a strike that was later referred to as "Mower's Charge." The attack was so bold that General Sherman, in a rare display of discretion, recalled Mower's men and called off the attack. Before it was halted, Mower had actually overrun Joseph E. Johnson's Confederate headquarters. Mower earned a praiseworthy reputation in the Regular Army in every grade through major general. General Grant even recommended him for promotion to brigadier general of volunteers.³⁹

³⁹ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 257.

In an effort to have Mower promoted to major general of volunteers Sherman intervened with President Lincoln. Sherman had such confidence in Mower's abilities that he proclaimed: "Say to General Mower that I want him advanced and if he will whip Forrest I will pledge him my influence for a major-general and will ask the president as a personal favor to hold a vacancy for him." Sherman then telegraphed President Lincoln with the request and referred to Mower as "one of the gamest men in the service." When informed later that Mower did defeat Forrest, Sherman exclaimed: "Tell General Mower I am pledged to him for his promotion and if Old Abe don't make good my promise then General Mower may have my place." In April of 1865 Sherman assigned Mower to command the Twentieth Corps and said: "I had specially asked for General Mower to command the Twentieth Corps because I regarded him as one of the boldest and best fighting generals in the whole army." He was 36 years old.⁴⁰

Colonel Truman B. Ransom, '25 was once the president of Norwich University and unfortunately killed in action at Chapultapec during the Mexican War. He had three sons, the most promising of whom was Brigadier General Thomas E. G. Ransom, '51, who rose through the ranks to command the 11th Illinois Infantry, followed by a brigade, a division and finally, the Seventeenth Corps. Contemporaries viewed the young Norwich-trained Ransom as a man born to command who was blessed with a strong character and deep-rooted moral convictions. In an early assessment of his abilities as a combat commander and troop leader, Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant believed, "Ransom would have been equal to command of a corps at least," that he was "a most gallant and intelligent volunteer officer," "as fine an officer . . . as can be found in the service," and

⁴⁰ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 257.

the “best man I ever had to send on expeditions.” Citing one example of his ingenuity, which occurred while the army was bridging the Big Black River during the Vicksburg Campaign, Grant recalled how, “Ransom felled trees on opposite banks of the river, cutting only on one side of the tree, so that they would fall with their tops interlacing in the river, without the trees being entirely severed from their stumps.” When this task was complete, “A bridge was then made with these trees to support the roadway. Lumber was taken from buildings, cotton gins and wherever found for this purpose. By eight o’clock in the morning . . .the troops were crossing.”⁴¹ It was this kind of expertise that could only be found in a soldier with civilian experience and an expertise not taught at the National Military Academy at that time.

General Sherman referred to the 29-year-old Ransom as a “young most gallant and promising officer.” One of the more outstanding examples of his valor in combat came during the murderous general assault on the seemingly impregnable Vicksburg defenses on May 22, 1863. Ransom personally led the charge of his brigade on foot, and several of his regimental commanders fell dead or wounded (survivors of the assault would refer to Ransom’s courage as “supernatural”). The attacking troops came upon what seemed to be an impassable ditch:

The column wavered, General Ransom rushed to the head, seized the colors of the 95th (Illinois) and waving them high over his head shouted “Forward men, we must and will go into that fort! Who will follow me?” The tide was turned. The column advanced . . .and fought for a full thirty minutes across the breastworks, when General Ransom, satisfied that the position could not be carried . . . addressed them: “Men of the 2d brigade we cannot maintain this position; you must retire to the cover of the ravine one regiment at a time and in orderThe first man to run shall be shot on the spot. I will stand here and see how you do it.” The movement was executed as coolly by every regiment as if on battalion drill and the command was reformed . . .without confusion and without a single straggler.

⁴¹ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 258.

Ransom's troops, despite the attack's eventual failure, had actually managed to plant several of their colors on the enemy rampart before being repulsed.⁴²

After three years of field service and many wounds Ransom died in Georgia on October 29, 1864, a month short of his thirtieth birthday. Ransom found comfort in the fact that he was dying in the line of duty, and his last words were: "As a soldier I have tried to do my duty. I do not claim that all I have done was owing to patriotism alone, though I believe I have as much of that as most men." Sherman, his fellow commanders and his troops, mourned his passing. Shortly after his death, Ransom's mother received his major general's commission from President Lincoln, a small token of the esteem in which he was held by his superiors and the President of the United States.⁴³

One of the more distinguished alumni to serve in the Western armies was Brig. Gen. Edward Hatch, '50. Hatch served consecutively as a cavalry regimental, brigade and division commander. He led the 2nd Iowa Cavalry in the famous "Grierson's Raid," and was portrayed in the movie "The Horse Soldiers," starring John Wayne. Following the war, Edward Hatch went on to a distinguished Regular Army career in command of the 9th United States Cavalry, one of the army's two famous regiments of "Buffalo Soldiers." While in the west, Hatch was severely wounded in action and cited for gallantry at least three times.⁴⁴

Brigadier General William "Bull" Nelson, '39, was a big man who stood 6'4" tall and weighed 300 pounds. After serving several years in the United States Navy, he switched to the army in 1861 in order to see more action. A personal friend of President

⁴² Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 259.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p 260.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p 262-263.

Lincoln, Nelson played an important role in keeping Kentucky in the Union. At the battle of Shiloh, he commanded a division in Maj. Gen. Don Carlos Buell's army. In the aftermath of the Shiloh victory, Nelson earned a promotion to major general. Soon after the politically well-connected Brigadier General Jefferson C. Davis killed him, over an argument in which Nelson slapped Davis in the face after Davis had thrown a crumpled piece of paper in Nelson's face. A particularly outrageous and publicized incident at the time, the Norwich man's death was described by Major General Don Carlos Buell, commander of the Army of Ohio: "General Nelson, an officer of remarkable merit was . . . assaulted and killed by General Davis, accompanied by Governor Morton, the very day before the army was to march against the invaders."⁴⁵ Davis was immediately placed under arrest and the case was pushed to Washington for trial, due to the high operational tempo at the time. General Buell was surprised to learn later that, "Davis was released, ostensibly that the case might be turned over to the civil authority." In the end "the military authority of the government was abased over the grave of a high officer, whose slaughter by another officer under such circumstances and as a purely military offense, it had not the character to bring to trial."⁴⁶

Dozens of Norwich alumni who served in theaters other than the East were cited for gallantry, earned promotions, were wounded, or killed in action. All are excellent examples of the citizen-soldier, as envisioned by Alden Partridge. Captain Charles E. Denison '45, 18th United States Infantry, died a few days after being severely wounded in the battle of Murfreesboro. First Lieutenant John B. T. Mead, '51, served as the adjutant of the 28th Illinois at Shiloh and was mortally wounded there while rendering gallant

⁴⁵ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 264.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

service. Lieutenant Colonel Arba N. Waterman, '55, was severely wounded and cited for gallantry at Chickamauga; he was soon discharged due to the crippling nature of his wounds. Lieutenant Colonel Fredrick W. Partridge '45, 13th Illinois, a son of the founder of Norwich University, who received several citations for valor, was wounded in action, commanded the 13th regiment in several major battles, and was brevetted a brigadier general before the end of the war.⁴⁷

First lieutenant Henry Clay Wood, '56, 11th United States Infantry, was one of those rare individuals whose valor in combat soared above and beyond that of his comrades. Leading a company of mounted rifle recruits at the battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri, on August 10, 1861, Clay was severely injured and earned a Congressional Medal of Honor for distinguished gallantry. Too badly wounded to return to the front, Wood held important staff positions in the War Department during the remainder of the Civil War, and then went on to an outstanding postwar army career, rising to the rank of brigadier general in the Regular Army.⁴⁸

A total of five Norwich alumni were awarded medals of honor during the Civil War, the most interesting of which was awarded to Brigadier General Edmund Rice, '56 for leading his regiment and the 42d New York in the charge against Pickett at the battle of Gettysburg. A quote from an official letter recounting the events reads as follows.

The conspicuous gallantry of Maj. Edmund Rice of the 19th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry at the third day's battle of Gettysburg, where he was severely wounded, did more than a single exertion of any other officer on our side to retrieve the day after the battle had been virtually won by the Confederates who had broken our lines and were cheering and swinging their hats on our captured guns. After the line was broken the 19th dashed in, and placed themselves in the rear of the break and for twelve minutes received the enemy's fire at a distance of less than fifteen paces. In that time one man in every two of the whole regiment,

⁴⁷Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 264.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p 266.

and seven over, fell, including Rice, who was shot in front of his men, he being at that moment the officer fighting nearest the enemy in our whole line. He fought till he fell; his men fought till they fell. His example held them firm at a great crisis in the country's history.⁴⁹

Major General Alfred H. Terry (Class Unknown) was another great example of a citizen-soldier. He began his service as a 33-year-old colonel in command of the 2nd Connecticut at Bull Run. Following his discharge, Terry raised and led the 7th Connecticut Infantry. He served in turn as a brigade and division commander and eventually was promoted to lead the Army of the James' Tenth Corps. His most famous wartime accomplishment was the dramatic assault and capture of Fort Fisher at the mouth of the Cape Fear River, North Carolina. This action earned Terry the official thanks of Congress because it sealed off the Confederacy's last port in Wilmington. Soon after he was promoted to major general of the volunteers, and eventually earned a brigadier generalship in the postwar Regular Army. He went on to a distinguished career in the United States Army, eventually becoming the first Civil War volunteer officer to rise to the grade of major general, United States Army. When speaking of Terry's abilities as a commander, Ulysses S. Grant declared:

His way was won without political influence up to an important separate command---the expedition against Fort Fisher, in January 1865. His success there was most brilliant and won for him the rank of brigadier general in the regular army and of major general of volunteers." Speaking of Terry's character, Grant added that he was " a man who makes friends of those under him by his consideration of their wants and their dues. As a commander, he won their confidence by his coolness in action and by his clearness of perception in taking in the situation under which he was placed at any given time."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ William A. Ellis, *Norwich University: Her History, Her Graduates, Her Roll of Honor Vol II*, (Concord, New Hampshire, 1898), p 638.

⁵⁰ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 267.

The Honorable Walter Aiken entered Norwich University in 1850 and stayed for two years. Although he never graduated, he did retain some of the same qualities that were common among Norwich graduates. Walter Aiken was an entrepreneur who had a lot of success with his inventions and business ventures. He was a Democrat in politics and held several offices in city and State Legislature. Mr. Aiken's service in the Civil War was unique, and a great example of a successful American citizen who had a love of country and a sense of duty. A quote from the *History of the First New Hampshire Regiment* describes his service. "The boys in blue will never forget the timely visit to the camp in Poolsville of Walter Aiken of Franklin. He came with his pockets full of money, which he distributed among the boys with a liberal hand. He did not enlist, but took up a musket and did military service as a private during the remainder of the campaign."⁵¹

The army was not the only place Norwich men distinguished themselves as vital assets to the Union. Forty-three alumni served in the United States Navy and Marine Corps. The most famous of these was Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles, '26. Welles was one of President Lincoln's most trusted advisors, and was counted among his personal friends and confidants. He was a moderating influence in the cabinet and served as the architect of the rebuilding and modernization of the wartime Union Navy. As Secretary of the Navy he was instrumental in the development and implementation of the federal blockade of southern ports. Among his most famous wartime decisions were those authorizing the building of the *U.S.S. Monitor* and the beginning of the transition of the United States Navy to iron ships. When the war ended, the United States had the

⁵¹ William A. Ellis, *Norwich University: Her History, Her Graduates, Her Roll of Honor Vol II*, (Concord, New Hampshire, 1898), p 541.

most modern and powerful navy in the world. He also had the foresight to commission the original design for the first Congressional Medals of Honor.⁵²

Rear Admiral Hiram Paulding, '23 was one of the first naval officers appointed to that esteemed rank by President Lincoln. He was in charge of the rebuilding of the United States Navy and personally oversaw the outfitting of the *Monitor*, the first Union ironclad. Paulding also played a little known role in the naval support that was provided to the suppression of the infamous draft riots in New York City during July-August 1863.⁵³

Admiral George Dewey, who is most famous for his part in the destruction of the Spanish Fleet at Manila Bay in the Philippines, attended Norwich University from 1851 – 1854. He received an appointment to the Naval Academy in 1854 and graduated fifth in his class in 1858. During the Civil War he was assigned to the *Mississippi*, as second officer, in Admiral Farragut's fleet in the West Gulf squadron. He participated in the capture of Forts Jackson and St. Philip as well as the capture of New Orleans, April 29, 1862.⁵⁴

In 1870 when the State of Vermont decided to officially recognize Norwich University as The Military College of the State of Vermont, which came with a Board of Visitors and an annuity of \$6,000, Admiral Dewey had this to say: "Vermont could not express in any more fitting a way whatever regard it may feel for him, than to substantially aid the university where his military training was so effectively begun."⁵⁵

⁵² Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 271.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p 272.

⁵⁴ William A. Ellis, *Norwich University: Her History, Her Graduates, Her Roll of Honor Vol II*, (Concord, New Hampshire, 1898), p 557.

⁵⁵ N.L. Sheldon, *Norwich University*, (Norwich University, Northfield, VT, 1899.) p 22.

Today, the United States Naval Academy's most prominent academic building, Ward Hall, bears the name of a Norwich graduate of the class of 1823. Captain James H. Ward, commander of the Potomac Flotilla in the spring of 1861, had the dubious distinction of being the first Federal naval officer killed in action during the Civil War. Ward had commanded the Potomac Flotilla in the war's first naval engagement at Aquia Creek, Virginia, on May 31, 1861, and was hit by a minie ball in another engagement at Aquia Creek on June 27, 1861. Prior to the rebellion, Ward had been a prominent instructor at the Naval Academy at Annapolis during its infancy, and his textbook on naval science and tactics was the standard work at the academy for years.⁵⁶

Many of the Norwich citizen-soldiers distinguished themselves in civilian life and were able to support the Union without taking up arms. Some of the more prominent were Horatio Seymour, '28, war governor of New York; Jonathan Tarbell, '39, chief justice of the Supreme Court of Mississippi; Caleb Lyon, '40, member of Congress and governor of Idaho; Alvan E. Bovay, '41, the founder of the Republican Party; and the list of engineers and railroad men is endless.

The Norwich University *Roll Of Honor* lists a total of 605 alumni who served during the civil war. A minimum of 61 alumni were either killed in action, died of wounds received in battle, or perished from disease or other causes. Dozens of others suffered permanently disabling wounds or were struck down by illnesses of varying severity. These men were destined to live out their often-shortened lives either crippled or in a weakened state.⁵⁷ These citizen-soldiers truly gave all they could for their country, and helped reshape the United States military and its focus on manning forever.

⁵⁶ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 272.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p 275.

The common attributes found in all the above examples are patriotism, and a sense of duty and honor. These are the attributes that Alden Partridge believed were most important to the survival of this great nation. Norwich University, using Partridge's system of education, teaches and nurtures these citizen-soldier qualities in all who pass through its halls.

Chapter 6

MERITS OF A CITIZEN SOLDIER

The debate over the relative merits of the regular army versus those of the volunteers (militia) began well before the Civil War, and it is still ongoing today. The issue was addressed by Gideon Welles in 1862. Welles said that:

General Scott was for a defensive policy . . . [This] was necessary in order to adapt and reconcile the theory and instruction of West Point to the war that was being prosecuted.” Welles also added that, “Instead of holding back, we should be aggressive and enter their territory. Our generals act on the defensive. It is not and has not been the policy of our country to be aggressive towards others, therefore defensive tactics are taught and the effect upon our educated commanders in the civil war is perceptible.” “The best material for commanders in civil strife may have never seen West Point.” “Courage and learning are essential, but something more is wanted in a good general –talent, intuition, magnetic power, which West Point cannot give.⁵⁸

Welles valued his Norwich education enough to send his own son there and, he became convinced during the course of the war that, “Men who have made the best generals and who possess the best and highest qualities to command may not have been so fortunate as to be selected by a member of Congress to be a cadet.”⁵⁹ Welles’ comments do not necessarily refer to Norwich, but it is reasonable to conclude that his experiences while a cadet there helped to shape his beliefs.

Alden Partridge was not unlike most military men of his time. His background and specialty were the Napoleonic wars and he was well versed in the strategy and tactics of Napoleon. He did not let that skew his teachings when given the opportunity to implement his own curriculum. Norwich, unlike West Point, was not consumed with one discipline or instructional approach. It was much more diversified and placed heavy

⁵⁸ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 283.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

emphasis on extensive fieldwork. The curriculum was designed to stimulate creativity and innovation. Mr. Poirier said in his book that:

It is likely that Partridge's military academy at Norwich produced a hefty number of like thinking souls. Norwich trained officers, furthermore, would certainly not have lacked confidence in the innate ability of the American citizen-soldier. In fact, Norwich cadets were taught that the American volunteer soldier was, when properly trained, superior to the "professional soldier." Tens of thousands of these same citizen-soldiers were trained and commanded by Norwich drillmasters and line officers over the course of the war.⁶⁰

Clara Barton, a wartime commentator and participant who had observed both regular and volunteer soldiers gave her thoughts on the subject in a post war speech. In arguing for a continued reliance on a volunteer force versus a professional army, she said that:

The ranks of the Regular Army will be largely recruited with needy foreigners, strangers to the genius of our institutions: that the safety of our country rests essentially with those who rise from its bosom in the hour of need and peacefully retire when it is over." She warned, "The days of a nation are numbered when its common citizens refuse to fight its battles. In the days [when] a man is more precious than silver and gold had a fabulous value, the offer of a private soldier was of more worth than a gift of a Captain. Young men enough would take commissions, but who of his own free will would shoulder a musket and trudge for 2 or 3 years, through all the toils and hardship?"⁶¹

Over the course of the war, Norwich men faithfully served the Republic in every rank from private (seaman) to major general (admiral). Seven are known to have risen to the rank of full major general in the army and 19 to brigadier general, while another six held flag rank in the navy. A minimum of four other Norwich men served as general officers in the Confederate army, two served as commodores in the Confederate navy,

⁶⁰ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 283-284.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p284.

and one served briefly as Attorney General of the Confederacy.⁶² Norwich alumni were present at each major action of the war from Fort Sumter to the surrender ceremony of the Army of Northern Virginia four years later. Although the concept of the citizen-soldier received much criticism in the regular army, the individual accomplishments of the citizen-soldiers could not be overlooked and individually they were recognized and rewarded. Norwich University was the largest provider of citizen-soldiers during the Civil War and thus provides the best example by which we can judge the value of such an army. The contributions made by Norwich and its graduates do not prove or disprove the argument for a standing army over that of a volunteer army, but the examples shown in this paper suggest that a properly trained citizen-soldier is complimentary to a standing army and can only make it stronger. There should never have been an argument over the existence of a citizen soldier. A debate over how much of the total force would be made up of these citizen-soldiers and how should they be trained would have been more constructive.

⁶² Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 280.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

The Congress shall have power...To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress insurrections and repel invasions; To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia, and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the appointment of the officers, and the authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress.

--Constitution of the United States, Article I. Section 8.

At the start of the Civil War, the Union found that it did not have enough trained officers to lead the army. “The 20,000 officers initially required overwhelmed the supply of 1500 West Point and Norwich graduates available for service.”⁶³ The officer shortage forced Congress to make some provisions for the education of citizen-soldier military leaders. Representative Justin S. Morrill of Vermont, a friend and neighbor of Alden Partridge, introduced legislation that came to be known as the Land-Grant College Bill in December 1861. President Lincoln signed the bill in July of 1862, and it became known as The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862. The law required land-grant colleges, using funds gained from the sale of public land, to teach agriculture, mechanical arts, and military tactics.

Professor Gary Lord, associate professor of history at Norwich University, makes a strong argument in a paper delivered at a symposium at St Michael’s College that the Morrill Land-Grant act of 1862 was heavily influenced by a proposal for a national system of education submitted to Congress by Alden Partridge in 1841. Partridge’s “American System of Education” called for large-scale aid to the States for education. It

⁶³ The Unofficial History of Army ROTC. Chapter 1 – The ROTC Heritage. URL: http://www.jhu.edu/~rotc/rotc_history_1.htm

suggested that Congress appropriate the proceeds from land sales to fund as many as eighty schools. These schools would be required to teach courses in military science, agriculture and mechanics. Justin Morrill lived only twelve miles from Norwich University and although he never acknowledged borrowing any ideas contained in the land-grant act from Partridge, the similarities are unmistakable.⁶⁴

Norwich University stood alone as the only non-Federal military college available to the Union from the very beginning of the Civil War. The institution continued to educate and train its cadets to be leaders and effective citizen-soldiers, and also conducted special accelerated courses for militia, volunteer and regular officers, as well as men in search of a commission in the Regular Army. Hand picked detachments of cadets were sent to Vermont training camps to serve as drillmasters.

President Lincoln, a former citizen-soldier himself, was well aware of the contributions made by Norwich University. When Elzey G. Burckham, '66, petitioned the President for an appointment to the United States Military Academy in 1862, he was informed the entering class was full. President Lincoln then instructed Burckham to enter Norwich University and spend two years there, after which he would be commissioned. The president also offered a commission in the United States Colored Troops to Joseph H. Goulding, '65 after he had completed two years as a Norwich cadet. Goulding accepted and was commissioned into the 6th United States Colored Infantry. Another distinguished graduate, Col. Henry O. Kent, '54 was appointed as the aide to the adjutant-general of the state of New Hampshire during the Civil War and was present at Lincoln's

⁶⁴ Gary Lord, *Alden Partridge: Advocate of The Citizen-Soldier and Spiritual Father of ROTC*. presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Military Institute. (Virginia Military institute, Lexington, Virginia, 14 April 1989).

Gettysburg address serving as the President's personal military aide for the duration of his stay in Gettysburg.⁶⁵

Until recently Norwich University has done very little to promote its impressive history and accomplishments to the general public. Whatever the reason, it is now possible to identify and recognize the contributions made by this country's oldest private military college. The total number of men sent by Norwich to serve the Union compares favorably with that of West Point. A total of 936 West Pointers served the Republic vice some 700 men from the younger and much smaller Norwich University. Conversely, 296 West Pointers served the Confederacy as compared to 56 Norwich men. In addition, unlike West Point and its Southern counterparts, Norwich sent dozens of its alumni into Naval service.⁶⁶

Norwich University successfully maintained, with some difficulty, the campus' academic and military life during the Civil War. It emerged a better institution with a well-deserved reputation of distinguished service. The performance of Norwich graduates as described in this paper can be viewed with great pride as verification of Alden Partridge's system of education. There is no doubt that the service of hundreds of Norwich-trained officers and men in the training of troops and as combat commanders had a decidedly positive impact on Union arms. At a time when knowledge of military affairs was desperately needed to instruct the mass volunteers of the Republic, Norwich men were there to serve.

The revolutionary education provided by Alden Partridge centered on the learner instead of on the topic. Students needed skills and practical knowledge for daily

⁶⁵ Robert G. Poirier, *By the Blood of our Alumni: Norwich University Citizen Soldiers in the Army of the Potomac*, (Mason City, Iowa, 1999), p 280.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p 276.

application. This belief led Partridge to reject the unquestioned reputation of classical education. He wanted to extend education to people beyond learned professions. He envisioned a country where soldiers were educated in more than military matters and civilians were well versed in the ways of the military. His vision was put to the ultimate test during the Civil War, a test that his system of education passed with flying colors. The Civil War is full of examples, some of which are represented in this paper, of citizen-soldiers, who applied knowledge outside of military education with much success. The Norwich system instilled in its graduates a strong sense of patriotism and a solid understanding of military affairs, which many of them carried into the civilian sector. The value of this civil understanding of military affairs cannot be understated.

The most serious deficiency in the American militia system prior to the Civil War was the Nation's failure to prepare militia officers for their responsibilities. In order to remedy that deficiency, Partridge revolutionized the system of education in America at the time. Partridge's curriculum was based on the notion that the best system of education was one that would prepare youth "to discharge in the best possible manner, the duties they owe to themselves, to their fellow men, and to their country."⁶⁷ His plan for combining military and civil education was highly innovative and remarkably farsighted. His farsightedness can easily be seen in the extremely important part that ROTC plays in our present system of education and in the modern army.

There are several traits that are required of a good military officer; respect for authority, obedience to orders, discipline of mind and actions, and patriotism. Alden Partridge realized early on that these traits were just as valuable to civilians and

⁶⁷ Gary Lord, *Alden Partridge: Advocate of The Citizen-Soldier and Spiritual Father of ROTC*. presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Military Institute. (Virginia Military institute, Lexington, Virginia, 14 April 1989).

especially important to the continued growth of our nation. Norwich University successfully instilled these traits in its students, and by the time the Civil War started there were a lot of Alumni both in and out of the army who would prove loyal to the United States and all that it stood for.

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