

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

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Remembering the Civil War

Last Monday I carried out a promise made a year ago at the East Longmeadow Memorial Day service. I presented the townspeople with a listing of the men of that town who died in the Civil War. Let me explain why the town, which cares deeply about fallen warriors, has not memorialized those who fought in the War Between the States. East Longmeadow was a thriving community in the 1860s, but it was part of Longmeadow at the time. That is why the men who died have not been distinguished as citizens of East Longmeadow.

After noticing this hole in the town's history, I offered to fill it. The list of 27 Longmeadow casualties is readily available, and I expected to spend a quiet morning at the historical society matching the names with a listing of addresses. But it was not that easy. I soon learned that people did not have addresses in 1865. There were, of course, no phone books, and the earliest city directory dates from 1870. So I searched further. Mabel Swanson, Longmeadow Historical Society curator, supplied me with old town maps that identify many family property owners. Then she directed me to the U.S. census records at the Springfield city library.

Enlisting the help of librarian and local historian Linda Rodger, I then perused the microfilm copy of the hand-written census of our town. Even with the census data, the only way to determine where people lived was to trace the route of the census taker by matching names with the map sites, thus identifying the East Longmeadow men. Additional data from the library's volumes of Civil War enlistments allowed me to identify ten townsmen who perished in the Civil War.

We began our task with basic information on hand about the enlistment and death of each soldier from Longmeadow records. We then gathered further data about more of their lives by reading the old records, and when we finished, we felt a real connection with the soldiers. Two of the men, Edmund and Levi Warner, were brothers from in the northeast corner of town. They died within a year of each other. Timothy Mullen, who lived near the Connecticut border, was only 14 years old when the census was taken. He was killed at Sailor's Creek, Virginia, in the last month of the war. The other casualties were Edward Burt, James Donohue, Asahel Gage, Jr., Elisha Goss, Ethan Lathrop, Frank Stebbins and Myron Taylor.

The results of my research have now been presented to East Longmeadow as a part of the town's centennial celebration. The project demonstrates that the history of the town reaches back farther than 1894. It reminds Longmeadow that our town shares an early history with our neighbor to the east. And it enriches both Longmeadow and East Longmeadow to know of our shared patriotism in the Civil War.