

MAINE'S WAR GOVERNOR: ISRAEL WASHBURN, JR. AND THE RACE TO SAVE THE UNION

BY KERCK KELSEY

*Almost forgotten today, Israel Washburn, Jr. was one of the greatest political leaders to come out of Maine. Washburn was a self-taught country lawyer in Orono. He won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives as a Whig in 1850 and served four additional terms. In Congress, he challenged southern control of the federal government, especially in matters pertaining to the protection and expansion of slavery. Discouraged by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, he and others sparked the political revolt among northerners and westerners that resulted in the formation of the Republican Party. Washburn was elected governor of Maine in 1860 and when the war broke out, he led an unprecedented effort to support and strengthen the federal government, despite the loss of state power that this entailed. His leadership helped keep his party and his state committed to the cause that saved the Union. Kerck Kelsey is historian for the Washburn-Norlands Living History Center in Livermore. A frequent writer and lecturer about the Washburns, he is author of *Israel Washburn, Jr., Maine's Little-Known Giant of the Civil War* (2004). He is a great, great, grandson of Israel's brother, Cadwallader. A graduate of Princeton and Harvard, he lives in Freetown, where he is currently working on a new book about all ten of the Washburn siblings.*

WHEN A nearly-paralyzed Congress adjourned in Washington in the spring of 1860, Representative Israel Washburn, Jr. returned home to find his state much excited over Senator Hannibal Hamlin's nomination as the Republican candidate for vice president. The party was to hold its state convention in Bangor, just down the road from Washburn's home in Orono, and many of Washburn's long-time colleagues, like Senator William Pitt Fessenden, ex-Governor Edward Kent, and Kennebec Journal editor James G. Blaine, would be there. Washburn looked forward to the gathering, but hardly expected to share the spotlight.

Maine's Republican convention was a matter of national importance. If the party could produce a good Republican showing in Maine's "early-bird" September election, it could build momentum elsewhere



Israel Washburn was born in Livermore and practiced law in Orono. He was elected to the state legislature in 1842 and served in Congress between 1850 and 1860. In January 1861 he returned to Maine as governor. From Augusta he presided over the war mobilization effort in Maine, at a time when these details were handled at the state, rather than the federal level. Burrage, *Maine in the Northeastern Boundary Controversy*.

for Hamlin and Abraham Lincoln in November's national election. To do this, Maine Republicans needed a candidate who could win the governorship. Washburn had no aspiration for the office. He had almost half his current term in the House of Representatives to serve, and along with his brothers Elihu of Illinois and Cadwallader of Wisconsin, he formed an important east-west power block in the House. He was popular in his district, and his re-election was assured. However, Maine Republicans needed his influence at home.¹

For weeks, the party had been dealing with a major scandal in the State Treasurer's office in Augusta. Representative James G. Blaine, who had previously written of Treasurer Benjamin D. Peck that "a more honest and trustworthy man does not live," now had to report losses to the state of over \$94,000, caused by Peck.² As with the liquor-related Portland "riot" prior to the 1855 election, state Democrats suddenly had a local issue with which to attack the Republicans, and they looked forward to a campaign in Maine where they could talk about something other than slavery. Uneasy with the independent-minded Washburn, James G. Blaine, editor of the powerful *Kennebec Journal*, promoted the wealthy but inarticulate Abner Coburn for governor, but in the weeks before the convention Blaine's paper fell silent. The party suddenly needed someone who was above reproach, who could campaign hard, and who could win decisively. Just hours before the meeting, the party offered the nomination to Washburn. The news of his acceptance was greeted with "an ovation that shook old Norumbega Hall," Albert Paine remembered. With 363 votes necessary to nominate, Washburn got 429 on the first ballot. The *Kennebec Journal*, its previous editorial silence forgotten, commented that the convention's demand was "irrepressible."³

Washburn was an unlikely choice to be leader of the state. Henry Adams called him "ugly as the very devil," although "good humored and nervous and kindhearted as ever." An in-law observed that "on horseback his figure lent itself more to the cartoonist than to the heroics of military life." Even General Oliver O. Howard, who owed his first wartime command to Washburn, remembered the governor for his spectacles and the fact he was so short he had to be hoisted up on a barrel to introduce Howard to his new troops. An opposition reporter compared Washburn's public speaking to a galvanized bullfrog.⁴ Yet the party had good reasons to make the offer. In his ten years in public life, Washburn had campaigned from one end of Maine to the other, and his popularity was attested by his five elections to Congress from a former Democratic stronghold, each time by a comfortable margin. In addition,

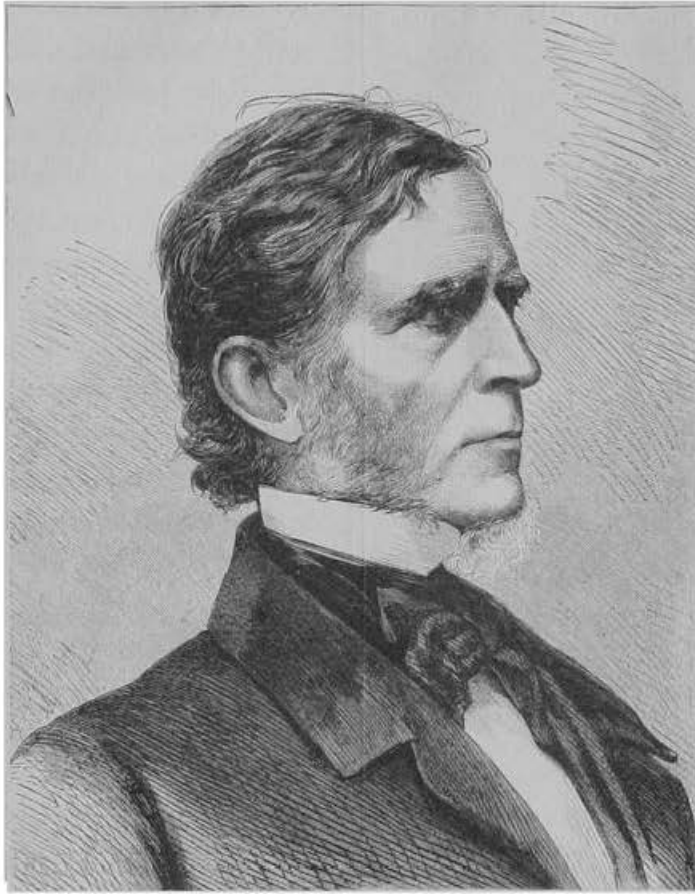
he was well known among national Republican leaders and could acquire national party money to help with state campaign expenses. He could also improve prospects for federal favors if the Republicans won the national election.

Although Washburn never spelled out his reasons for leaving Washington, there are indications that national politics were paramount in his thoughts. His party's overarching priority was to elect a president in November, and Maine's September election, he knew, could provide a powerful impetus for that effort. He also knew that the federal government was weak, and that the states were strong. In the event of sectional conflict, he could do more for his country as Maine's governor than as one of its six congressmen. Finally, Washburn held ambitions to become a U.S. Senator. The legislature in Augusta chose the state's senators, and if the Lincoln-Senator Hamlin ticket won in November, the legislature would need to replace Hamlin in January. Furthermore, there would be another chance when William Pitt Fessenden finished his term or was promoted to the cabinet. If Washburn was to have a chance at the Senate, he needed to build political capital in Augusta.

The Election of 1860

Due to its early elections, Maine was in the national spotlight in the 1860 campaign. Democratic presidential candidate Stephen A. Douglas spoke at Democratic meetings in Augusta and Bangor, and William H. Seward spoke for the Republicans. Perennial favorites Henry Wilson and Anson Burlingame came up from Massachusetts. Not to be outclassed by huge rallies and torchlight parades in Bangor and Augusta, the tiny town of Pittston hosted a gathering at Steven's Grove that drew 5,000 people and featured a fourteen-car train of young "Wide-awakes" in full uniforms and capes. True to his reputation, Washburn campaigned hard. In one month, he made twenty-eight speeches, traveling from South Berwick to Eastport. He drew crowds as large as eight thousand spectators. He headed parades and attended picnics during the day and illuminations at night. As voting day approached, the *Kennebec Journal* issued warnings and exhortations: "Remember the Effect on Other States," and "Beware of spurious tickets, stuffed ballot boxes, border ruffian lies!" Among other constituencies, it appealed to "Soldiers of 1812!"; to "Fishermen of Maine!"; to "Patriots of Aroostook!"; and to "Ship Owners of Maine!"—all to "Get out the Vote!"⁵

In September, Washburn indeed gave his party the boost they had hoped for, winning the governorship by a margin of 18,000 votes. The



During his decade in Congress, Washburn gained a number of influential friends. Among them was Maine Senator William Pitt Fessenden, later Secretary of the Treasury in the Lincoln administration. By taking the governor's seat, Washburn hoped to build political capital at home in a bid for the Senate, possibly when Fessenden finished out his term. Maine Historical Society Collections.

party also swept all six congressional districts, the entire State Senate, and four out of every five seats in the state House of Representatives. In all, the Republicans won fifteen of the sixteen counties in the state. Even more impressive, the total votes cast were almost twenty-five percent higher than any previous voter turn-out in Maine's history. To cap Washburn's year, up on the Aroostook River, in the midst of the lumber country he had served for so long, residents of the village of Salmon Brook incorporated their new town and named it after the new governor. The record voter turnout, plus Washburn's leadership during the next two years, put Maine into a position of influence throughout the northern states.⁶

Two months later the Republicans won the national election. South-



When Hannibal Hamlin left the Senate to become vice president, the Maine legislature replaced him with former Governor Lot Morrill, leaving Washburn in the governor's office. As an ex-Democrat, Morrill better represented one of the larger factions in the new Republican party. *Maine Historical Society Collections*.

ern Democrats had nominated John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky and northern Democrats, Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois. With the Democrats split, Lincoln and Hamlin won the election with less than forty percent of the popular vote. In Maine, the Republican margin was even greater than it had been in September—an impressive 24,000 votes. During the months between the election and Lincoln's inauguration, eleven southern states seceded, and northern politicians launched a frantic last-minute effort to avoid war. Washburn remained inimical to the Southern insistence on the right to expand slavery, and he opposed all efforts to compromise.

Washburn's perspective was unusual for a state governor. With more than a decade of experience in the national government, he was close to some of the most influential of the nation's new leaders, and he spoke for his party on issues extending far beyond his state. With no local axes to grind, he avoided partisan struggles over temperance and immigration

in Maine, and he was above scandals, including the irregularities in the state treasurer's office. His inaugural address on January 3 focused on the national crisis, and it was somber. He warned his fellow citizens that the "cloud, gathered in the southern sky, is casting its portentous shadow over the land." The slave states would accept no concessions that would circumscribe "the rights of expansion and protection to their peculiar property," he predicted, and this he found was "wholly inadmissible." In response to their new leader, Maine lawmakers put their normal fractiousness aside and sent a resolution to Washington pledging the state's support with "all the means and resources which it can command."⁷

Having declared its support for the federal government, the legislature moved to elect a new U.S. Senator. Former Governor Lot Morrill was the favored candidate, although plenty of people knew that Washburn was interested. Much as Washburn may have wanted the job, he realized that it would be far more unifying to have Morrill, an ex-Democrat, serving with Fessenden, an ex-Whig, than to have two ex-Whigs representing the state. Based on these considerations, Lot Morrill won the vote in the legislature by 124 to 23. Blaine, who was now the Speaker of the Maine House, supported the three-time former governor, and Washburn stayed out of the fray. By so doing, he kept the legislative waters unruffled at this critical time and avoided conflict with Blaine, whose help he would need in the coming crisis.⁸

The first few weeks of Governor Washburn's term were quiet but ominous. He agonized with Massachusetts Governor John A. Andrew about whether or not to send representatives to Virginia's "Peace Convention." He approved a bill, over Blaine's objections, to retain the state's Personal Liberty Laws, thus underlining the state's defiance of federal laws ordering the return of runaway slaves. Washburn traveled to Boston to confer with Governor Andrew, who was hard at work putting Massachusetts on a war footing. On January 7 he met with Andrew's emissary to discuss military preparations. Washburn sent word that "wherever Massachusetts leads, Maine will follow close, if she can't keep abreast."⁹

Yet Washburn held out hope that the southern states would not secede from the Union. In his January 3 message to the legislature he announced that "they cannot go, and in the end they will not want to go." He repeated his optimistic message on February 22: "how can this Union be broken up?... It cannot be destroyed, and in the end no one will desire its destruction." As if to underline the business-as-usual atmosphere, the Washburns hosted a gala reception at the capitol in Augusta on March 5. The *Journal* reported that they sent out 1,500 invitations, and 1,000 guests attended. Years later, Washburn remembered the flags and

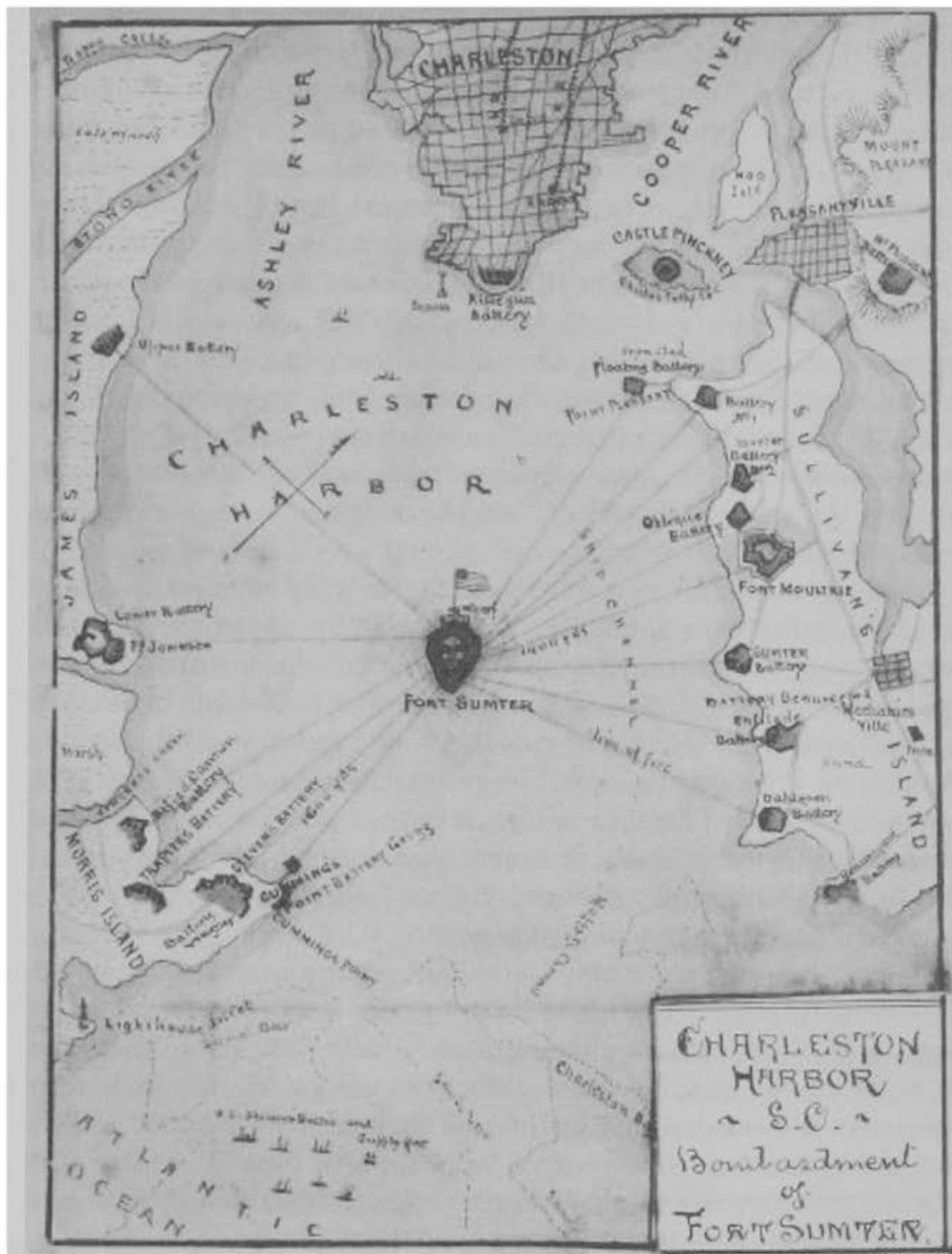
bunting, the band stage, and the guests arriving from all over the state. The “dancers made it bright and joyous notwithstanding the dark cloud that was rising in the South.”¹⁰

The War Governor

In defiance of federal attempts to re-supply Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, on April 12 southern artillery and mortars opened fire on the federal installation. For citizens of Maine and the nation, the abstract debates about slavery were instantly replaced by the reality of war. Washburn had spent years rousing public sentiment about the aggression of the slave interests, and now, suddenly, it was no longer a matter of oratory. Washburn himself later described the significance of the cannon fire at Sumter: “it was not possible for slavery to be removed in any other way. The free states could not destroy it, nor could the General Government. It could be destroyed by the slave owners themselves, and by no other party. Without the assault upon the Government, wantonly and wickedly made by the slave power, no force of public sentiment could have been created, no combination of circumstances could have arisen adequate to the overthrow of this wide-spread and deep-rooted system.”¹¹

Certainly in Maine and elsewhere in the North, the call to save the country was far more compelling than the call to free the slaves. Stopping the expansion of slavery had been a successful political appeal, but Washburn well knew that few Mainers would go to war over the issue of slavery in distant western lands. Secessionists attacking an installation of the federal government, however, was something else. The ideology of the Republican Party now coalesced into one penultimate purpose: to preserve the Union. Events moved quickly after Fort Sumter surrendered on April 14. Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteer troops. Maine’s share was one regiment, not to exceed 1,000 men. New Hampshire and Vermont issued proclamations of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, but in Maine and Massachusetts, the action was faster and blunter.

Governor Andrew of Massachusetts, a native of Windham, Maine, and a graduate of Bowdoin College, took office in January at a full gallop to rescue the federal government. As early as January 18 his legislature voted to send aid and money at the government’s request, and to raise 20,000 men immediately. On April 17, in a sleet storm with tailors still sewing buttons on overcoats as the men assembled, Andrew had two regiments on the trains bound for Washington. On April 19, pro-southern mobs killed two of these men, both Mainers, on their way through Baltimore.¹²



Following the siege of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 troops to help preserve the Union. In Maine, an estimated 6,000 men enlisted over the next thirteen days. Thus began the enormous job of mustering, clothing, supplying, and transporting Maine's new regiments. Library of Congress map.

In Maine, Washburn called a special session of the legislature on April 22. His words to the assembled body were determined: "all of us . . . failed to perceive the intentions . . . of the malign spirits who have dominated the policy of a large number of the Southern States for many years. . . . The idea of succession being a remedy . . . must be rebuked, exploded, exterminated. . . . Let the loyal states exhaust every resource they possess . . . This is no time for words. The hour for action has arrived." Over the next three days the House and Senate authorized money to procure and equip vessels for defense of the state's coast, and in a major surrender of state power, they allowed local troops to be mustered into federal service and authorized the raising of ten regiments of volunteers—ten times Lincoln's request. As a testament to its resolve, the legislature authorized the state treasurer to borrow \$1,300,000, nearly tripling the state's debt, which Washburn had just been elected to reduce.¹³

Maine was a thinly-populated state, far from the Mason-Dixon Line and even farther from the Kansas Territory. Maine political leaders had been wary of the federal government since ratification of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842, which forced the state to concede millions of acres of territory to New Brunswick after a long and contentious boundary dispute that nearly brought the United States and Great Britain to war. As a member of the state legislature in 1842, Washburn remembered the tactics that the federal government used to gain Maine's approval of the Webster-Ashburton agreement. But now the country was facing a new crisis, and the state and its new governor did not hesitate to pledge their lives and property to support the federal government.

Mainers from Presque Isle to Kittery responded to the federal call to arms, with the main assembly point at Augusta, just across the street from the capitol building. In the little town of Corinth, fifty-four men enlisted in just one day. On April 28, just six days after Washburn's call to the legislature, he proudly wrote to Hamlin in New York City that Maine's first regiment would soon arrive there. He estimated that more than 6,000 men, almost four percent of all the eligible males in the state, had enlisted within thirteen days after Lincoln's call. By the war's end, the figure grew to almost sixty percent, a total of 70,107 men, the highest percentage of any northern state.¹⁴

Healthy males between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five found many compelling reasons to go to war. In church, their ministers spoke about curbing the sin of slavery and defeating the wicked slave owners. Friends or family members who had emigrated to Kansas wrote to them

of outrages by pro-southern raiders and the need to restore freedom and law and order. Local political leaders talked about upholding Maine's honor and saving the government. At a time when jobs were scarce, the allure of local, state, and national bounties was compelling, as was the promise of adventure, the appeal of the uniform, and the fact that at least in the beginning the enlistment term was for only ninety days. Encouraged by these incentives, Maine recruits flocked to the colors.¹⁵

Since there was little state military infrastructure, the new governor took a direct hand in creating the new army. Regiment after regiment assembled from scratch, and Washburn was everywhere: driving, cajoling, inspiring, and providing absolute certainty that the cause was worthy. Years later local leaders remembered the governor's telegrams during the first few days of mobilization: "rendezvous the troops. The state will pay."¹⁶ During these early months, the War Department did not provide equipment or training for the new army. As a result, Governor Washburn personally dealt with every detail. His requisitions created so much telegraph traffic that he requested a reduced rate from the telegraph company. He had to find shoes, clothing, tents, wagons, horses, harnesses, weapons, band instruments, and even buttons. Once received, everything had to be counted, checked, and distributed. Transportation was a major problem; Washburn moved recruits to assembly points and got them to Augusta, where they were equipped, mustered in, and given rudimentary training. This involved trains, and at times uncooperative railroad conductors. At one point, three recruits without tickets were put off a train and had to walk to Augusta. From Augusta, Washburn sent the troops on special trains, along with their horses and wagons, to Boston, and then by steamship further south. In addition to arranging transport, he made sure everyone was paid properly. Washburn maintained a broad view of this effort: as he wrote to Consul P.M. Moore in London in June, "the hundreds of millions that the rebellion will make us pay will be the best investment the country has made since the beginning. It will be shown, thank God, that we are a nation; a nation to be respected by all others, as well as by our own people."¹⁷

Mounting Difficulties

Although Washburn was committed to saving the central government, his relations with Washington were not always cordial. The mobilization effort contributed new layers to the federal bureaucracy, creating difficulties in clothing, supplying, training, and enlisting the troops, along with a whole host of other problems. In these early war years,

Riflemen, ATTENTION !

A COMPANY OF ONE HUNDRED MEN to be selected from the

BEST RIFLE SHOTS,

In the State, is to be raised to act as a ~~COMPANY OF SHARP~~
~~SHOOTERS~~ through the War. Each man will be entitled to

A BOUNTY OF \$22,00,

When mustered into the service of the United States, and

100,00 DOLLARS

at the close of the War, in addition to his regular pay.

No man will be accepted or mustered into service who is not an active and able bodied man, and who cannot when firing at a rest at a distance of two hundred yards, put ten consecutive shots into a target the average distance not to exceed five inches from the centre of the bull's eye to the centre of the ball ; and all candidates will have to pass such an examination as to satisfy the recruiting officer of their fitness for enlistment in this corps.

Recruits having Rifles to which they are accustomed are requested to bring them to the place of rendezvous.

Recruits will be received by **JAMES D. FESSENDEN,**
Adams Block, No. 23, Market Square, **PORTLAND, Maine.**

Sept. 16, 1861.

Bridgton Reporter Press,—S. H. Noyes, Printer

When the army's first ninety-day enlistments expired, Maine towns began a desperate search for new recruits. Responsible for provisioning the troops and sending them south, Washburn also lent his voice to the recruitment effort. Library of Congress.

Washburn personally oversaw most of Maine's logistical concerns, but as the war dragged on, War Department intrusions became more frequent and irritating. The transition from state to federal authority proved to be Washburn's biggest challenge. Most of the newly commissioned state officers exceeded the War Department's age requirements; repayments for supplies from vendors were delayed; pay records were snarled; and shortages of basic equipment loomed. The Second Regiment shipped out "in heavy gray suits looking for all the world like Confederates," and then were quarantined in New York with the measles, a common predicament for farm boys who had never before been confined in crowded quarters. Through it all, whether persuading Portland ladies to knit stockings or stiffening the spines of timid officers, Washburn kept a firm hand on the helm.¹⁸

Within the first months of the war, enlistment terms became a major concern for the Union effort. As the first ninety-day terms expired, Maine launched an effort to get the troops to re-enlist for three years. Officers in the First Regiment tried to use the situation to procure better weapons from the governor. This unit, drawn mostly from Portland, "had much political influence but little else, was ordered home having, according to the press of the day, performed no service, gained no honors and entitled to no particular credit, [the victim of] an unfortunate selection of officers, and a combination of unfavorable circumstances. The regiment was raised at an enormous expense, poorly uniformed and equipped, and had been unfortunate from the first."¹⁹ One colorful scheme that attracted the governor's eye was a muster of lumbermen and river drivers from the Penobscot region, all of them at least six feet in height. Drawn mostly from Old Town, they were to be called "the Jam Breakers" and would require "uniforms several sizes larger, on the average, than had ever been made, either in Maine or Massachusetts."²⁰ Unfortunately, this unit never materialized.

July 1861 brought news of the Union defeat at Bull Run, where Mainers constituted nearly a quarter of the Northern troops in the fight. To rally their morale, Washburn traveled south in August. Correspondents wrote that the men were glad to see him. Because the War Department still proved unable to provide supplies, Washburn stayed involved in their support long after the troops left the state.²¹ He faced problems at home as well. In Bangor, an angry mob ransacked the offices of Marcellus Emery, an anti-war newspaper editor. The Second Regiment, now over the measles but still full of ninety-day recruits who wished to go

home, caused particular headaches. News of a mutiny in the unit hit Washburn "like a bombshell," and he hinted darkly that the discontent was "stimulated by traitors at home." Its commanding officer, Colonel Charles D. Jameson, resigned, and federal army authorities court-martialed sixty-six men and sentenced them to the federal prison in the Dry Tortugas. On the way to prison, they "concluded to re-enlist," as one history put it, and some later performed heroically with the Twentieth Maine Regiment at Gettysburg. Jameson, a Democrat, challenged Washburn for the Governor's chair that fall, but Washburn was re-elected with more votes than both his opponents combined. Jameson was subsequently appointed Brigadier General, and he told the *Bangor Whig* that he had received "nothing but the most friendly treatment from the Governor on that and all other matters."²²

Difficulties continued into the fall. In October, Maine's ninth completely equipped regiment was ready for service, and the state's initial appropriation was exhausted. In addition, the hard-luck First Regiment was back in Augusta, to be re-constituted as the Tenth Regiment, this time with only three-year men. Blaine went to Washington to battle the War Department for funds to repay the state, an effort he likened to "fighting beasts at Ephesus."²³

As the war escalated, the problem of finding competent officers grew. Local units elected their own officers, while the governor appointed the senior command. "Men dreaded a draft less than being put under inexperienced officers," commented the *Belfast Progressive Age*.²⁴ Inevitably, Governor Washburn received many complaints about his appointments, and he certainly found some of his officers troublesome: "Major Pierce's election was secured by trick and management," he wrote at one point; "if Capt. Osgood does not resign, he will not be mustered." At another point he fulminated that "there must be some authority exercised," and continued: "I hope Col. Roberts is too much of a man to be influenced by so poor a creature as Rich." He urged Maine's General Oliver O. Howard to "get rid of poor timber among officers as speedily as possible."²⁵ On the other hand, his conscience bothered him about removing those officers. As he wrote in his journal ten years after the war:

Of all the worries of my official life, the most serious are those relating to the discharge and appointment of officers. I dislike to remove officers, if well disposed men, however inefficient they may be as officers. I know that as a general rule they have laid up nothing while in office, and go out of it as poor as when they came in, and less ready and able



As governor, Washburn was responsible for the officer staff in regiments flying the Maine flags. At one point he instructed General Oliver O. Howard to “get rid of poor timber among officers as speedily as possible.” Library of Congress photo.

to help themselves. The longer a man has been in place, the less willing he is to leave it. I cannot satisfy the politicians either.²⁶

Assignment of junior officers would not be a problem for the war governors much longer. As the War Department increasingly took over the job of raising troops, military experience and competence in the field outstripped political considerations at home as criteria for promotion and command.

Beyond issues of morale, disloyalty, and officer incompetence, Washburn also had to confront the issue of Maine's vulnerability to foreign attack. As thousands of their young men were turned into soldiers and shipped south, neither Washburn nor the legislature forgot that their state was surrounded on three sides by the British Empire, which held strong southern sympathies. Maine's 2,000 miles of coastline were vulnerable to attack by sea. The issue of coastal defense, a sore point in Maine since 1812, came to a head in October. A petition to President Lincoln outlined the consequences of failure to defend the coast of Maine, and two months later Washburn extended the plea to Senator Lot Morrill, including a reminder of the state's sacrifice of 1842:

We are wholly unprotected and British troops may within two months be marched by Madawaska and Riviere de Loup to Quebec over the very territory wrested by the U.S. from Maine by the central govern-

ment in 1842. The folly and madness of that affair may soon be apparent to all. Not only are our defenses neglected—strangely, considering our coast and boundary lines—but our territory is taken away from us to give the only enemy we can fear upon this continent an opportunity to march his troops to attack us. As Governor Lincoln once said, “Maine has not been treated as she has endeavored to deserve.”²⁷

Responding to Maine’s concern the federal government funded fortifications in Portland Harbor, at the mouth of the Kennebec River, at Bucksport, and elsewhere on the coast. Although the massive installations were neither used nor in most cases completed by 1865, they gave the federal government a conspicuous presence for the first time on the coast of Maine. Even after his death, Washburn was remembered for his success in impressing the central government with “the necessity of increasing the defenses of the state.”²⁸

In January 1862 Washburn began his second term of office. In his address to the legislature, he reported on the strengths and weaknesses of Maine’s wartime situation. The state’s recruiting was over quota, with Aroostook County demonstrating the highest per-capita participation. Once again he spoke of the lost territory along the Canadian border and of the state’s vulnerability to foreign invasion, and once again he denounced those who opposed the war. “A conditional Union man is an unconditional traitor,” he declared. He was careful on the subject of slavery. Although many northerners justified the war in order to preserve the union, rather than to abolish slavery, few would accept the preservation of that institution in exchange for the end of the conflict. Furthermore, if the war could be ended sooner by striking the chains from the slaves, Washburn declared, then the people “will demand and insist that the chains shall fall and the war shall cease.”

Washburn’s territorial sensitivity was soon put to another test. Following the American seizure of southern diplomats James Mason and John Slidell from a British ship, in an incident known as the Trent Affair, the British sent troops to Canada. Although Lincoln headed off the crisis by ordering the two agents released, a British troop ship arrived off Newfoundland in January and was blocked by ice in the St. Lawrence River. British Foreign Secretary Lord Lyons asked Secretary of State William H. Seward for permission to land the troops in Portland for transit via the newly completed Grand Trunk railroad across Maine to Montreal. This produced instant alarm in the Maine legislature. Washburn managed to quell the uproar, but he sent Seward copies of the debate. Seward’s amiable response showed how far Maine had come in the

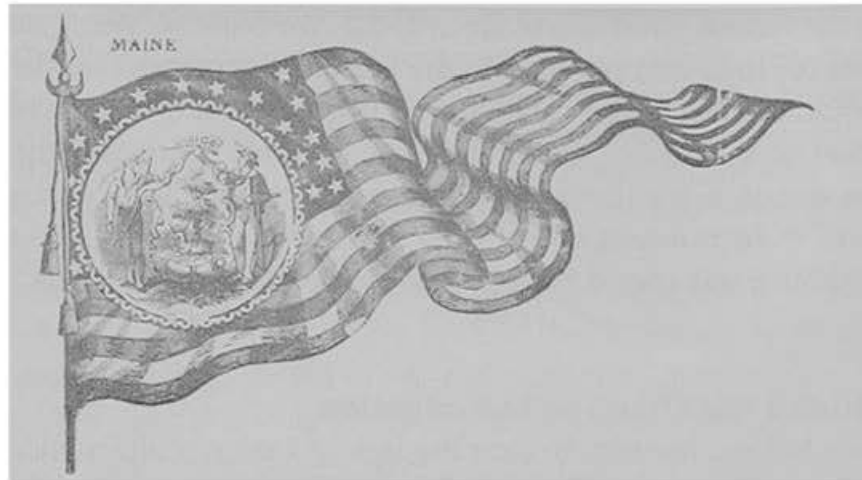
eyes of the federal government since 1842: "the State of Maine has been so eminently loyal and patriotic in the present emergency that the President would not feel himself at liberty to wound any sensibility which she might feel on the subject. If therefore you shall advise me that the directions in question are likely to have that effect, they will be cheerfully modified."²⁹ Fortunately, Lord Lyons rescinded his request, and Governor Washburn was spared this opportunity to decide the nation's foreign policy.

The National War Effort and Federalization

By early 1862 frustration over the lack of Union military success replaced the excitement of the war's first months. As the War Department grew in size, it also grew in authority. Lincoln replaced Simon Cameron with the far more efficient Edwin M. Stanton as secretary. A blanket of paperwork now smothered the sense of urgency that had driven the states to raise and equip the earlier regiments. Washburn's frustration with the federal bureaucracy grew stronger. He now relied on authorities outside of Maine to address issues of armament and payment—duties he formerly authorized himself. As a man of action, it was difficult for him to see thousands of unpaid and unassigned men languishing in the frozen mud outside his office window. The *Journal* reported that 5,953 men had been camped in Augusta between December and March 1861–1862, and that forty-eight of them had died. Eventually the troops were moved out, but the sense of frustration lingered.³⁰

Repeated efforts to pay bills from the previous year, together with continuing shortages of supplies and equipment for the troops in the field, occupied much of the governor's correspondence during spring and summer 1862. An increasingly frustrated Washburn fired off angry letters to Senator Morrill, Senator Fessenden, and Secretary of State Seward. Vice President Hamlin got most of the fire, especially about General George McClellan, under whom Maine troops spent most of 1862 mired without result in Virginia. "Men ask what's the use to send soldiers to loaf near Manassas, or contract fatal diseases at Yorktown," Washburn wrote, "in waiting to give the rebels time to make a masterly retreat? When these sick and disabled men return with their stories, it is certain that the work of recruiting is not made easier."³¹

Soon, the federal government took over the job of recruitment. Lincoln's May 3 call for forty new regiments of volunteers, all for three years or the duration of the war, specified that they would be under federal control. In spring 1862 the secretary of war appointed the first provost



By the closing months of Governor Washburn's term, military logistics had been given over to the federal government. While this was a natural outcome of the crisis at hand, Washburn found the transition troublesome. He spent his last months in office preoccupied with local details, like presiding over a 4th of July parade in Portland, but he never lost his focus on federal events. Envelope detail, Library of Congress.

marshals in Maine, who reported directly to the federal provost marshal general of the regular army. When the Maine Central Railroad refused to deliver supplies until their freight bills were paid, Elijah Low, federal provost marshal for the Penobscot District, received the following advice from Washington: "Take possession of the Maine Central Railroad and run it at government expense." There was no further resistance from the railroad. Things had changed since Washburn's battles with railroad agents a year earlier.³²

As the annual Republican convention approached, so did the question of Washburn's running for another term as governor. In April, the *Journal* reported that "Mr. Washburn was unqualifiedly averse to being a candidate for another election. We understand his declination to be without reservation."³³ Washburn did decline, and as it turned out, he would never again hold elected office. Washburn had grown frustrated with the War Department. Near the end of his term, in a long private letter to Hamlin, he complained about the lack of cooperation from the federal military commander of the state and from his adjutant. He admitted that "these things, among others, determined me to step aside, that there might be a Governor who would be more promptly attended to." His decision may have involved a personality conflict with the federal commanders in his state, or a frustration with his loss of power. The clutch of state militias, raised and commanded by local leading citizens,

had given way to a national army and navy. In December the federal government quietly ordered the Neal Dow Regiment, which Washburn had requested the charismatic ex-mayor of Portland to raise from among his teetotalling followers, reconstituted as the Thirteenth Regiment. In addition, Washburn may have been weary of Blaine's machinations in the state party organization. Ironically, Washburn's exit opened the door to Blaine's twenty-year control over the state's Republican party. Blaine probably blocked Washburn's election to the U.S. Senate on four separate occasions.³⁴

Governor Washburn's last months in office were eventful. He dominated the platform at an enormous 4th of July "spectacle" in Portland. He issued an officer's commission in the Twentieth Regiment to an obscure young professor of rhetoric from Bowdoin College named Joshua Chamberlain. On May 28, the governor presided over a national Universalist Church convention in Boston. Despite these bright spots, new problems accompanied new draft quotas in August. Washburn told Secretary Stanton that because Maine supplied five times as many sailors as other states, there were no eligible males left in the coastal towns, and the state's pool of draftable males was drawn from interior towns, which had already furnished more than their quotas. Remonstrances, he reported, "were pouring in from all quarters." Although a national draft was postponed twice in 1862, the threat persuaded most towns to hasten their recruiting efforts. The press shared this sense of urgency. One Bangor paper noted: "those drafted persons who have knocked out their front teeth to procure exemption are informed that they will be accepted in the Cavalry, where front teeth are not needed to bite off cartridges."³⁵

In September, the War Department forwarded the casualty lists from the Battle of Antietam, just as it became apparent that General George McClellan had allowed Lee's army to escape. Governor Washburn, torn between loyalty to Lincoln and his anguish over lack of progress by the armies, attended a meeting of impatient northern governors at Altoona, Pennsylvania, to prepare a petition demanding that McClellan be replaced, that African Americans be enlisted, and that the war be pursued more energetically. These governors were critically important to the Union war effort, and Lincoln took their restlessness seriously. In November, Washburn made a trip south for a last visit to the troops as governor. When he arrived in Washington, he went directly to President Lincoln with his complaints about McClellan. He relaxed upon finding that Lincoln was equally frustrated, and the next day Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton told Washburn that the president sent orders relieving Mc-

Clellan of command. As Washburn headed out to visit the troops, his train was halted at Manassas to allow the deposed general's train to pass by on the other track.³⁶

In December, with just days left in his term, the governor once again urged the enlistment of black troops. He wrote Hamlin to "urge upon the Pres. and Secty the indispensableness of tremendous, instant energy. Halting [or] hesitating is death and endless disgrace." Three days later he wrote Hamlin again to exhort the president: "Let him be clear, bold and strong . . . any backing down is death." Six days later he wrote on behalf of five Maine regiments who had not been paid for six months, and ended his missive: "Excuse me. I shan't worry you much longer. This day two weeks [hence] I retire to private life."³⁷ With that, the year 1862 and the energetic governor's term came to an end.

As governor of Maine, Washburn's greatest contribution, ironically, was to support the federal government. Washburn inspired the citizens of his state to action when the peril arrived, and he kept them on course during discouraging times. During this time of national crisis, more than 50,000 Maine men enlisted, and as governor, Washburn saw that they were equipped and sent to the battlefields. This required precise accounting for the expenditure of millions of state dollars and millions more in federal reimbursement.³⁸ Abner Coburn, who followed Washburn in the governor's office in 1862-1863, proved less effective as a unifier; factionalism returned to the legislature, and Blaine quickly replaced Coburn with Samuel Cony. Temporarily renamed the Union Party, the Republicans won again in 1863, but the bickering continued. Within months of taking office in 1864, Governor Cony wrote Washburn wistfully, "I often feel provoked with you for not holding on to the helm of state."³⁹

Israel Washburn, Jr. oversaw some important changes in Maine and the nation in the eventful middle decades of the century. While in Congress, Washburn helped direct a fundamental change in American politics as he and others created a new party that would unify the North and West behind the cause of the Union. His administration as Maine's governor was marked by a vast increase in the power of the federal government. Federal assumption of state military prerogatives necessitated an enormous increase in the federal budget. New federal taxes brought benefits back to Maine ranging from military pensions and veterans' hospitals to public land-grant colleges. Other wartime governors followed, but it was Washburn who presided over these formative years of federal mobilization. For this, he was known for the rest of his life as Maine's "War Governor."

NOTES

1. Israel Washburn to "Dear Sir," November 16, 1859, Washburn Library, Livermore, Maine (hereafter WL).
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3. *Kennebec Journal*, May 11, June 15, 1860; Albert Paine, *In Memoriam, Israel Washburn, Jr.* (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1883), p. 103.
4. Ernest Samuels, ed., *Henry Adams, Selected Letters* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 32; interview with A.W. Kelsey, *Lewiston Evening Journal*, November 13, 1915; Oliver O. Howard, *Autobiography* (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1907), 1:114-15.; *Eastern Argus*, June 12, 1854.
5. Letter to Washburn, July 6, 1860, Washburn Collection, Library of Congress (hereafter LC); Michael W. Whalon, "Maine Republicans, 1854-1866: A Study in Growth and Political Power," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1968; *Kennebec Journal*, August 24, 31, September 7, 1860.
6. *Kennebec Journal*, September 14, 1860.
7. Public Laws of the State of Maine, Special Session, 1861; House Bill no. 11, January 29, 1861.
8. Hatch, *Maine*, p. 413; Gail Hamilton, *Biography of James G. Blaine* (Norwich, Connecticut: Henry Bill, 1895), p. 128.
9. Robert Gray Gunderson, *Old Gentleman's Convention: The Washington Peace Conference of 1861* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 18; Jerry R. Desmond, "The Attempt to Repeal Maine's Personal Liberty Laws," *Maine History* 37 (1998): 194-209; William P. Schouler, *A History of Massachusetts in the Civil War* (Boston: E.P. Dutton, 1868), p. 17.
10. *Kennebec Journal*, March 15, 1861; Washburn Family Journal, vol. 4, March 4, 1880, Washburn Library, Livermore, Maine.
11. Israel Washburn, "The Logic and End of the Rebellion," *Universalist Quarterly* 21 (January 1864): 5, 13.
12. *Kennebec Journal*, January 25, May 17, 1861; William B. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors* (New York: Knopf, 1948), p. 149.
13. Israel Washburn, "Address to Extra Session of the Legislature," April 22, 1861; *Kennebec Journal*, January 4, 1861.
14. *Kennebec Journal*, May 31, 1861; William B. Jordan, Jr., *Maine in the Civil War: A Bibliographical Guide* (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1976), p. 72. See R.H. Stanley and George O. Hall, *Eastern Maine and the Rebellion* (Bangor: R.H. Stanley, 1887), p. 25.
15. Murray Bowden, "The Problem of Conscription in Maine During the Civil War," M.A. thesis, University of Maine, 1948, pp. 57-70.
16. Reminiscences by Albert W. Paine, *Proceedings of Maine Historical Society*, 2d. series, 2 (Portland: Maine Historical Society, 1883), p. 98. See Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine and the Rebellion*, p. 25.

17. Israel Washburn to J.S. Bedlow, May 16, 1861, Governor's Papers, Maine State Archives (hereafter MSA), Augusta, Maine, folder 3; Washburn, Governors Papers, MSA, folders 3, 5; Washburn to P.M. Moore, June 8, 1861, MSA, folder 3.
18. Elizabeth Ring, *Maine in the Making of the Nation 1783-1870* (Camden, Maine: Picton Press, 1996), p. 394.
19. Israel Washburn to Simon Cameron, August 13, 1861, MSA, folder 6; Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine and the Rebellion*, p. 68.
20. Israel Washburn to Secretary Cameron, May 2, 1861, MSA, folder 3; Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine and the Rebellion*, p. 68.
21. *Kennebec Journal*, August 9, 1861.
22. Israel Washburn to Dr. McRuer, August 18, 1861, MSA, folder 6; Washburn to Colonel Roberts, August 18, 1861, MSA, folder 6; Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine and the Rebellion*, p. 56; *Kennebec Journal*, September 13, 1861.
23. James G. Blaine to Israel Washburn, September 19, 1861, in Gaillard Hunt, *Israel, Elihu and Cadwallader Washburn: A Chapter in American Biography* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 101.
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25. Israel Washburn, notes to Col. Harding, in charge of assembling units at Portland, between July 1861 and August 1862, MSA, folders 5-6; Washburn to O. O. Howard, August 8, 1861, Oliver O. Howard Papers, Bowdoin College Library, Brunswick, Maine.
26. Israel Washburn, personal journal, undated entry during last week in 1875, Washburn Library.
27. Petition to President Lincoln, October 23, 1861, MSA, folder 9; Israel Washburn to Lot Morrill, December 17, 1861, MSA, folder 11.
28. Paine, *In Memoriam*, p. 29.
29. Hatch, *Maine*, p. 444.
30. Ring, *Maine in the Making of the Nation*, p. 394; *Kennebec Journal* February 28, April 18, 1862.
31. Israel Washburn to Hannibal Hamlin, May 23, 1862, Washburn Collection, LC.
32. Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine and the Rebellion*, p. 173.
33. *Kennebec Journal*, April 4, 1862.
34. *Portland Sunday Telegram*, June 11, 1911; Israel Washburn to Hannibal Hamlin, October 8, 1862, Washburn Papers, LC.
35. *Kennebec Journal*, July 18, 1862; Israel Washburn to Edwin M. Stanton, August 28, 1862, MSA, folder 17; Bowden "Problem of Conscription in Maine," p. 27; Stanley and Hall, *Eastern Maine and the Rebellion*, p. 182.
36. Washburn, personal journal, vol. 2, pp. 121-25.

37. Israel Washburn to Hannibal Hamlin, December 17, 20, 23, 1862, Washburn Papers, LC.
38. Jordan, *Maine in the Civil War*, appendix.
39. Samuel Cony to Israel Washburn, May 12, 1864, Washburn Papers, LC.