



# Forever a Rhode Islander and not a Green Mountain Boy: Bradley J. Norris of Albany, Vermont

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than those being offered in Vermont.*

By ROBERT GRANDCHAMP

**I**n his massive 1886 and 1888 histories, *Vermont in the Civil War*, George G. Benedict recorded a total of 28,267 men who enlisted in one of Vermont's seventeen infantry regiments, one cavalry regiment, three batteries of light artillery, and three companies of sharpshooters. Benedict also listed 1,329 men who enlisted in the United States Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. While these enlistment numbers are truly impressive, Benedict failed to document the nearly 10,000 Vermonters who enlisted in units of other states.<sup>1</sup>

The 1860 census reported that 42 percent of the people who had been born in Vermont had migrated to other locations by the time of the

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Civil War. Lewis D. Stillwell, in his classic study *Migration from Vermont*, wrote, “if the Vermonters in the entire world in 1860 had been counted, an even half of them would have been found outside the state.” Many men would go on to enlist in regiments in every northern state, while some would even wear Confederate gray. In time, some would be forever connected to the state they enlisted from, and not Vermont, the state of their nativity.<sup>2</sup>

While most Vermonters who remained in Vermont served in Vermont regiments, a surprising number of men served in regiments from other states. Corporal Elmer Bragg was a native of Quechee. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he was a student at Kimball Union Academy in Plainfield, New Hampshire. When a number of his friends and classmates decided to enlist in the summer of 1862, Bragg went with his friends to Lebanon and enlisted in Company E, Ninth New Hampshire Volunteers. Corporal Bragg was mortally wounded on May 12, 1864, at Spotsylvania Court House, fighting under the flag of New Hampshire. His father brought his remains home, and today Bragg is interred in Quechee, while his gravestone notes that he served in the Ninth New Hampshire. Another soldier, Francis M. Nash, was born in Jericho Center on February 8, 1828. Nash was residing in Wisconsin at the start of the Civil War and in May 1861 enlisted in the famed Seventh Wisconsin Volunteers, later part of the legendary Iron Brigade of the Army of the Potomac. Nash survived the war, married, and later moved back to Jericho. He died in 1905 and is buried in the Jericho Center Cemetery.<sup>3</sup>

The 1860 census recorded 709 African Americans living in Vermont. Remarkably, 152 of the men among them enlisted in the Union forces during the Civil War. Because Vermont did not send a regiment of black soldiers to the front, these 152 men all enlisted in units outside the state, with the largest percentage joining the famed Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts.<sup>4</sup>

Another large contingent of Vermonters who served in a unit out of state was the College Cavaliers. Sanford Burr, a junior at Dartmouth College, proposed to enlist a company of college men to serve three months in the Union Army in the summer of 1862. Burr’s motives are unknown, but the experience would later prove beneficial to all of the men in their professional lives, as they were able to claim that they, too, had joined the Union forces in the time of peril. Burr recruited thirty-five students from Dartmouth, twenty-three from Norwich University, and several others from Bowdoin, Union, Williams, and Amherst colleges. To fill out the company, seventeen men were recruited from the Woodstock, Vermont, area.

Burr contacted the governors of all the New England states, but only

Governor William Sprague of Rhode Island would accept the services of the company for three months. A second company composed of non-college Rhode Islanders was recruited in Providence, and the two units became the Seventh Squadron of Rhode Island Cavalry. The squadron provided scouting services in the Shenandoah Valley in July and August 1862. Several members of the unit were captured, while Private Arthur Coombs of Thetford, Vermont, a Norwich cadet, died of typhoid at Winchester, Virginia. The Seventh Squadron was one of the few units to escape from Harpers Ferry during the siege and capture on September 14, 1862. The unit helped capture a Confederate supply train and was on the field at Antietam before returning to Providence for muster out. While the majority of the College Cavaliers came from Vermont, they were officially credited towards Rhode Island's quota of troops, and not Vermont's.<sup>5</sup>

Uz Cameron was born in Walden, Vermont. In 1862, he was working as a "peddler" in South Kingstown, Rhode Island. When the town raised a company for the Seventh Rhode Island Volunteers, Cameron enlisted in Company G of the regiment; he was fifty-one years old and married at the time. He enlisted in the Seventh Rhode Island because it was the most convenient unit for him to join at the time, and South Kingstown was offering bounties of five hundred dollars for men to enlist. Due to his age, Cameron became the company cook. A known sleep walker, Cameron fell overboard in the Mississippi River on June 9, 1863, when the steamer he was on was transporting the Seventh Rhode Island to Mississippi. Despite a search, Cameron's remains were never found. He left behind a widow and two minor daughters. Captain Edward T. Allen placed an informational advertisement in a local South Kingstown newspaper, asking for assistance in locating Cameron's widow in Vermont so that Allen could send the Vermonter's personal effects home. Susan Cameron eventually learned of her husband's death, and in January 1864, with Captain Allen's assistance, she filed for a widow's pension in Vermont.<sup>6</sup>

What were the motivations of these men to leave Vermont and serve in units from another state? For Corporal Bragg of the Ninth New Hampshire, it was because his friends all enlisted in the Ninth New Hampshire. For the College Cavaliers, no other New England governor would accept the services of a unit for only three months. In Private Cameron's case, he was living and working in Rhode Island at the time. For many Union soldiers, bounty money was one of the largest factors in determining where to enlist and would motivate men to leave their homes and travel to another town, or even another state, in order to obtain a larger payment.

Rhode Island is a good example. In May 1862, Governor Sprague issued orders to activate the Seventh Rhode Island Volunteers, a three-year infantry regiment. Recruits were painfully slow in joining the unit, and by July 1, 1862, barely 100 men had signed up. Following President Abraham Lincoln's urgent call for 300,000 men to serve three years following the Union defeat during the Peninsula Campaign, the towns of Rhode Island instantly responded, issuing bounties averaging four hundred dollars. The money had the desired effect: by mid-August the Seventh Rhode Island was fully recruited.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike many Northern states, Vermont paid her soldiers well. Vermont volunteers were allocated an additional seven dollars per month, paid by the state, as they were considered to be state militiamen called up to federal service. Initially, Vermont did not need to offer large bounties to her sons to enlist. In a history of Franklin County, however, Hamilton Child noted how this process changed during the war.

During the first year, in 1861, no special inducements were offered

for enlistments, save \$700 per month paid by the State to the soldiers and their families, and then more soldiers volunteered than were required. In the summer and autumn of 1862, some towns paid small bounties, from \$25.00 to \$75.00 for three years men. In 1863, town bounties ranged from \$100.00 to \$350.00 for three years men, and in 1864, the highest point was reached, from \$500.00 to \$1,000.00. The town of Fairfield paid as high as \$1,000.00 for one years men in the summer of 1864, while the town of Montgomery paid nothing throughout the war, except to drafted men.<sup>8</sup>

In time, many Union soldiers who joined up later in the war would be derided by their comrades as "bounty

**OUR COUNTRY CALLS**

THE  
CONSTITUTION  
MUST BE MAINTAINED!

**For Volunteers!**

Our patriotic Governor has authorized me to enlist men for  
**Battery F, 1st Reg't R. I. Artillery.**  
For the service of the United States, for THREE YEARS, unless sooner discharged.  
**A BOUNTY OF \$115!**

It is to be paid to every unaccompanied officer private or musician who enlists in this battery: \$115 when sworn in, and \$120 when honorably discharged.  
Each man will be allowed FIFTY CENTS PER DAY for subsistence, until he is sworn into service; as soon as sworn in, he is furnished with clothing, ammunition, equipment, and receives his regular pay.  
The Recruiters will be under the command of Capt. F. H. THORNTON and Lieut. Col. W. H. REYNOLDS, who, from active experience in the field are well-qualified to see that all necessary to make good soldiers. They are gentlemen in their dispositions, and have after the conduct of their own, which is an honorable qualification as to unlearned military tactics.  
The information for volunteers to enlist in this battery is more readily than in Infantry Companies, and it is desirable to have good, and not average army men: 1870 or 1871. To such as prefer to enlist, it is desirable that they should enlist at once, so as to quickly be mustered, and from each recruit of this battery an equal offer will be advised.

Headquarters at  
Recruiting Office.

COOK & BATHURST, STATE PRINTERS, STEREO FROM OFFICE, NO. 11 WATERBURY STREET, PROVIDENCE.

*Recruiting posters such as this encouraged men to join the First Rhode Island Light Artillery by proclaiming the bounties being offered. Robert Grandchamp Collection.*

men,” especially those who took the large sums of money and deserted. However, the sums being offered were often necessary to entice men to leave their families and businesses to enlist. By the end of 1861, as casualties began to mount and illness killed thousands of soldiers, the realization that war was no holiday sport came to many Vermont hill towns. The large bounties that began to be offered provided a nest egg for many families, and an insurance policy if their loved one never returned home. It was these large payments that spurred many to enlist. Among them was Bradley J. Norris of Albany, Vermont, who served in Battery D, First Rhode Island Light Artillery.<sup>9</sup>

Bradley Jonathan Norris was born on February 27, 1832, in Craftsbury, Orleans County, Vermont; interestingly, the birth was recorded by the town clerk in neighboring Albany. He was the son of Jonathan (1795-1873) and Lucinda (Cross) Norris (d. 1870), who together had ten children. The Norris family was originally from the Hampton, New Hampshire, area. After the American Revolution, Bradley’s grandfather, Jonathan Norris became a founder of the town of Craftsbury. Jonathan Norris Jr., Bradley’s father, was a farmer who in 1835 sold his farm in Craftsbury to “start over in Albany.”<sup>10</sup>

The 1850 census, found the Norris family, comprising twelve members, residing in Albany. Bradley was listed as a farmer, and his father owned real estate valued at \$1,800. The 1840s and 1850s saw a large decline in the value of Vermont farms as the Merino sheep craze of the 1830s dried up and large numbers of Vermonters moved west in search of better opportunities. Despite this, the Norris family remained in the Albany area, continuing to farm the rocky soil of northern Vermont. Of Bradley’s early life, not much is known, but with the exception of his Civil War service, he resided in northeastern Vermont.<sup>11</sup>

On October 2, 1853, Bradley Norris married Cleora L. Gerry, the daughter of Solomon Gerry and Polly (Lovell) Gerry, at Marshfield, Vermont. The union produced three children: Marietta S. Norris, born July 9, 1854; Eppa M. Norris, born April 10, 1858; and Salmon S. Norris, born September 13, 1860. The 1860 census found Bradley and his wife and two children residing in Marshfield, Vermont. Norris had a real estate value of six hundred dollars, and a personal estate of one hundred dollars. Two years later, at the time of his enlistment, the family was living in Walden, Vermont. This was another poor hill farm town, of 1,099 souls; 105 Walden men served in the Civil War, and nineteen never made it home.<sup>12</sup>

What caused Bradley Norris to go to Rhode Island to enlist is unknown. Perhaps he had family connection there; perhaps he knew the bounties were higher than those being offered in Vermont. In the sum-

mer of 1862, Vermont raised three, three-year infantry regiments in response to President Lincoln's call of July 1. These regiments became the Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Vermont Volunteers. Although recruiting for the Ninth Regiment had begun in June, it was under the July 1 call that the regiment's enlistment was completed. Thomas B. Hall set up an office in Groton in June 1862 to recruit a company of men from Caledonia County for the Ninth Vermont. At the time that he began plastering posters over Caledonia County exclaiming "Green Mountain Boys Awake!"; no bounty was being offered, and men recruited under this call only received the twenty dollars per month in state and federal pay. At the time of Norris's enlistment later that fall, Vermont was not actively recruiting men for the field. The state's last big push for recruits was in August and September of 1862, when nearly 5,000 men were recruited to serve nine months in what became the Second Vermont Brigade, comprising the Twelfth, Thirteen, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth Vermont Regiments. These men

received bounties of between fifty and one hundred dollars depending on the town. Because a man was not bound by geography or place of residence, he could travel to find another unit to enlist in.<sup>13</sup>

Despite Vermont troops having a sterling reputation on the field of battle, especially the Vermont Brigade of the Sixth Corps, Norris decided to enlist in the First Rhode Island Light Artillery, widely considered the best of its kind in the Union Army. He traveled to Providence and went to the Benefit Street Arsenal, the headquarters of the Rhode Island Light Artillery. From here, he received his initial training, uniform, and bounty before being sent to a Rhode Island battery in the field.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately for the Norris family, because Bradley



*Bradley J. Norris enlisted here at the Benefit Street Arsenal in Providence, it was the headquarters of the First Rhode Island Light Artillery Regiment, and is now a military museum.*

enlisted in Rhode Island, they did not receive the extra seven dollars per month that was paid to Vermont troops. Furthermore, at the beginning of the Civil War, the Vermont legislature had passed provisions for support payments to be made to “the family of any soldier heretofore enlisted into any company or regiment raised in this state.” This often came in the form of money raised by the community the soldier lived in, payable in proportion to how many dependents the soldier had. Although Norris may have obtained a higher initial bounty by enlisting in Rhode Island, he did not obtain the extra pay due to Vermont soldiers, nor did he receive any town payments being offered by Albany or Walden.<sup>15</sup>

On December 4, 1862, Norris enlisted for three years and was mustered in on December 15. The mustering officer noted that Norris was thirty years of age, five feet nine inches tall, and had a dark complexion, blue eyes, and black hair. Surprisingly, he listed his occupation as laborer, rather than farmer. Norris enlisted as a general recruit into the First Rhode Island Light Artillery, rather than into a specific battery. He was originally assigned to Battery H, which had recently left Providence for Washington.<sup>16</sup>

Battery H had originally been ordered raised in the spring of 1862, but took nearly six months to recruit, as men were transferred from it to reinforce the other batteries in the field. Although assigned to Battery H, on December 22 Norris was reassigned to Battery D. As someone from out of state, he did not have an obvious connection to a particular battery in the regiment, which was recruited in a specific geographical area. At this time, the City of Providence was offering a \$400 bounty for men to enlist. The money was an obvious encouragement for a poor farmer such as Norris, with limited means and a family, to join the army.<sup>17</sup>

After his enlistment, Norris was sent to Battery D, then encamped at Falmouth, Virginia, following the devastating Union defeat at Fredericksburg. Originally recruited largely from the towns of Warwick, Coventry, and Scituate, Battery D had a thoroughly rural composition, compared to other batteries of the First Rhode Island Light Artillery. Battery D saw heavy service at Second Manassas, Antietam, and Fredericksburg in 1862. The unit was commanded by Captain William W. Buckley, a well-respected officer who had risen through the ranks to take command of Battery D.<sup>18</sup>

In March 1863 the battery, together with the Ninth Corps to which it was attached, was sent to Kentucky. Here they performed garrison duty and chased after Confederate guerillas. While the rest of the Ninth Corps was sent to Vicksburg, Mississippi, in June 1863, Battery D re-

mained behind as part of the garrison to protect against Confederate guerilla attacks and spent much of the summer on guard duty. In September, after the Ninth Corps returned to Kentucky, General Ambrose Burnside received permission to launch a campaign to liberate East Tennessee, long recognized as a hotbed of Unionism in an otherwise secessionist state.

Battery D took part in the campaign and played an important role at the Battle of Campbell's Station on November 16, as well as the assault at Fort Sanders on November 29, 1863, where their six guns destroyed the Confederate assault on the fortification. Bradley took part in these events, serving as part of a gun crew, or as a driver assigned to pull the guns. Private George C. Sumner recalled the hard service endured by the battery in the campaign. "During the three weeks siege the men had no time to give any attention to their persons and, as may be imagined, they were, at the close of the siege, in a deplorable condition. It would be more than two months before we would see clothing and realize fully what suffering we would have to endure, from the extreme poverty of our condition in regard to clothing and food."<sup>19</sup>

With food growing scarce, orders were given to go on half rations of hardtack, pork, and coffee, until even these ran out. The only food available was ground corn meal, which "yielded only a cake of burnt dough, which required a good appetite to enable us to eat," recalled Sumner. On December 7, after the Confederates abandoned the Siege of Knoxville, Battery D set out in pursuit, through a terrible winter storm, with many men barefoot, lacking coats, and still near starvation. Private Sumner wrote, "It was a physical impossibility for the men to do even a half day's work." It is evident that the harsh campaigning, combined with cold temperatures and lack of food, took a severe toll on Private Norris; his service in Battery D lasted a little over a year.<sup>20</sup>

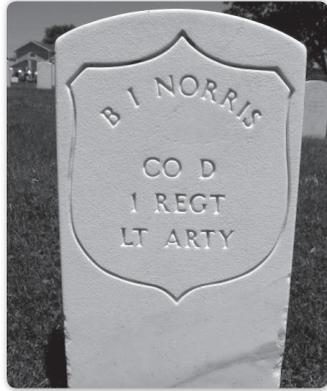
Like many Union soldiers, Norris contracted dysentery, caused by the poor water and unsanitary conditions of camp life. On December 28, 1863, he was sent to a Union hospital located at Blaine's Cross Roads, located some twenty miles north of Knoxville. It was here, on January 4, 1864, that he died of "disease contracted while in the service of the United States in the regular line of duty." Captain Buckley, the commander of Battery D began the process of notifying the Rhode Island adjutant general's office, as well as Norris's family in Vermont. In taking a final inventory, dated the day after he died, Captain Buckley noted that Norris had no personal effects with him and was buried in his uniform. However, Norris had \$83.50 in his possession when he died. Buckley noted that "the money was sent to his wife Miss Cleora Norris, Walden, Caledonia Co. Vermont."<sup>21</sup>

Private Norris was laid to rest in Knoxville National Cemetery in Section D, Grave 1868. As was typical of many Civil War memorials, Norris's stone was mis-carved, ironically by a Vermonter, as the stones were crafted after the war at the Vermont Marble Works in Proctor. Today, he rests under a marble monument, inscribed:

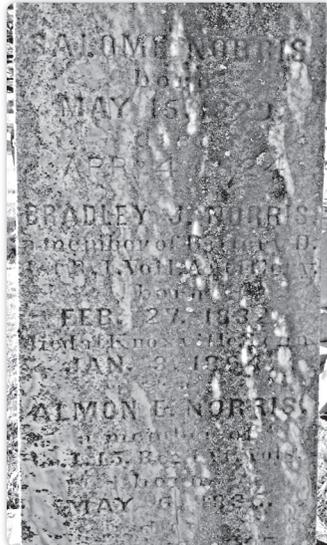
B I NORRIS  
CO D  
1 REGT  
LT ARTY

Not only is his name misspelled, but the marker does not identify his state of origin, or the state he enlisted from. In time, Norris's name would be inscribed on the family monument, a tall white marble obelisk, in the Albany Village Cemetery, with the correct information. However, the family monument does not denote that he is actually buried in Knoxville, and not Albany. His death was recorded by the town clerk in Albany; however, the clerk failed to note that his remains did not come home, listing his place of burial as the "Albany Cemetery."<sup>22</sup>

As soon as she received word from Captain Buckley that her husband had died, Cleora Norris began to seek out more answers about Bradley's death. With no other means of support, she tried desperately to locate the money that Captain Buckley had allegedly mailed back to Walden, as he had reported to the Rhode Island adjutant general. In reply, one of her husband's comrades wrote a detailed letter back to Vermont.



*The mis-spelled headstone of Bradley J. Norris at Knoxville National Cemetery, Knoxville, Tennessee. Robert Grandchamp Collection*



*The memorial inscription to Bradley J. Norris on the Norris family monument in the Albany Village Cemetery, Albany, Vt. Robert Grandchamp Collection.*

.....

Knoxville Tenn  
 March 9th 1864  
 Mrs. Norris

Dear Madam,

I just received your letter Dated Feb 26th And in reply feel deeply pained to think that you have not yet learned of your Husbands Death, he died on the 3rd Day of last January after a very brief Illness of Chronic Diorhea, in the same hospital he was in when he sent you his last letter of Jany the first. Before he went to the hospital I advised him to leave what money he had in some responsible persons hands and he accordingly did give to the Captain of our Battery Seventy Dollars, And gave him your address at the same time so that he could send you the money in case of your husbands Death. Your husband kept Fifteen Dollars for his own use when he went to the hospital and Twelve dollars of that money was brought and Delivered to our Captain at your husbands Death. The Captain promised to send you the money, at the first opportunity, but he has most shamefully neglected to do so. He has over Eighty Dollars of money belonging to you now and he deserves to be drummed out of the service for not sending it to you. The men in the Battery have all along suspected that he had never wrote to you nor send you the money. It might surprise some folks to think such a thing of him but we know him better than other people have a chance to. I would advise you to Apply to the Governor of R. Island and state your case to him and you will find him to be a man that will see that you have Justice. His adress is Hon. James G. Smith, Gov. R.I. Providence, R.I.

I may here state that I did not know your adress or I would have wrote to you long ago. Your husband was a brave and good soldier and was Deeply lamented by us all. Hoping God will comfort you and be a father to your orphan children.

I subscribe myself Dear Madam,

Your Sympathizing Friend,

Thomas C. Dudley

P.S. If you get this letter, please write to me and let me know and if you have any difficulty in getting your money I will assist in any way I possible can.

Thomas C. Dudley  
 Co "D" RI Light Artillery  
 Knoxville, Tenn<sup>23</sup>

Determined to find where the money went, Cleora followed Dudley's suggestions and wrote a letter directly to Governor James Y. Smith in Providence. Smith, widely popular among Rhode Island's soldiers, forwarded the letter to Captain Buckley, then on furlough in Providence. In reply, Buckley wrote back to Cleora:

.....

Head Quarters Battery "D" 1st R.I.A.  
 Providence, R.I. April 12th 1864  
 Mrs. Bradley J. Norris

Madam

Your letter to Gov. Smith was handed me a few days ago by Col. Bailey A.D.C. From the tenor of it I judge you did not receive the letters I wrote you from Knoxville. I am very sorry they failed to reach you. I wrote you Jan'y 11th enclosing \$83.50, the amount of money your husband wished me to send you and also what was handed me by the surgeon as having been found in his pocket at the time of his death. Mr. Dudley misinformed you if he told you the money was in my possession. I did not send it until a week after your husband's death as I did not consider it safe to do so, our mails having been very irregular, previous to that time. The letter was mailed Jan'y 11th at Blaines Cross Roads Tenn. where we were stationed at that time, some twenty miles out from Knoxville. I also wrote you another letter in answer to one from you the date of which I do not remember. The last one was written from Knoxville. I had some doubts about the safety of sending you the money as our mailes had been captured by the enemy a number of times previous to that date, but complied with your husbands request in so doing. I have no doubt you need it very much and shall see the Governor if something can be done for you by the State and will send you word if it can. I am

Yours very respectfully

Wm. W. Buckley  
 Capt. Cmdg Baty D 1st RIA<sup>24</sup>

Despite Captain Buckley's reply, Cleora continued to search for the missing funds. She again wrote a letter in desperation to Governor Smith.

Walden April 14 64

Hon Sir

I take the liberty to ask you to help me to some 83 Dollars that at my husbands death he left with Capt Buckley. The Captain clames to have sent it but I have heard from a man that belongs to Buckleys battery and he told me that he has good reason to beleve that he never sent the money to me for this man has looked the books over and their is no letter on the regester and he also told me at the time that the Capt claims to have sent the letter the comuncations were all cut up.

My husband Bradley J. Norris enlisted in the city of Providence over a year ago last December and died the 3 day of last January and left me with three small children to battle the cold starving world and I ask you in behalf of those children to try and git the money for me as Buckley is at home. I am in hopes to have you git it for me and send it to my Father to St. Johnsbury VT. My Father name is Solomon Gerry and pleas wright me to Walden VT.

.....

I will send you the letter I received from Buckley in which he says that he has the money but I have never received it from him. Please try and git it and oblige.

Mrs Cleora Norris<sup>25</sup>

The letter was again forwarded to Captain Buckley, who was at home in Providence on a furlough, but no record of a reply to Cleora has been found. There is no evidence that the money was paid out to Cleora. Neither Governor Smith nor Adjutant General Edward Mauran sent a voucher to Walden to make up for the missing money; in time, the City of Providence would pay out the rest of Norris's bounty money due him. The chances that Buckley kept the missing money for himself are slim; he was a well-respected officer who remained in the service until mustered out in October 1864, following the Battle of Cedar Creek. For his services, Buckley was given a brevet majority for "faithful and meritorious services." More than likely, the letter containing the money sent from Buckley to Cleora was lost in the mail or stolen in a guerilla raid.<sup>26</sup>

Civil War pensions have been called "America's first Social Security system." In his Second Inaugural Address, President Lincoln stated that the United States government would "care for him who have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan." Although the government had already been paying out pensions and land bounties to veterans of the Revolution, War of 1812, and Mexican War, the Civil War, with the vast number of men in the service, combined with casualty amounts never seen before or since in American history, changed how the government approached the pension system.

In 1862, as Union casualties mounted, Congress enacted sweeping pension legislation to provide benefits to disabled soldiers, as well as the dependents of those whose deaths were "incurred as a direct consequence of military duty."<sup>27</sup> Although the Bureau of Pensions—the federal agency that administered the program—had been founded in 1832 to provide benefits to Revolutionary War veterans, the 1862 act provided for an increase in the staff of the bureau, and it set up the process by which a disabled soldier or dependent could petition for a pension. The beneficiary of the pension had to establish his or her identity, provide affidavits that the wound, injury, or disease had been incurred in federal service, and in the case of dependents, had to establish that they were the spouse or child of the soldier. Oftentimes the pension clerks would respond with requests for additional evidence before making a final determination; indeed, between 1862 and 1875, nearly 30 percent of claims were rejected for one reason or another. While the amount of money provided by the government was small compared to what the soldier was making before he joined the army, the funds helped many

disabled soldiers or the dependents of deceased soldiers pay their bills and taxes, and to avoid starvation. As the twenty-nine-year-old widow of a deceased soldier, with three young children, Cleora Norris began the process of applying for a widow's pension to support herself and her family.<sup>28</sup>

On March 8, 1864, Cleora traveled to Danville, the shire town of Caledonia County, and appeared before a justice of the peace to declare she was the widow of Bradley J. Norris and they had three children together. Also appearing were a neighbor, John R. Rogers, and Cleora's father, Solomon Gerry, who declared "That their knowledge of the identity of her husband with the soldier is derived from the fact that we are neighbors of the parties, have been acquainted with Mr. Norris for 20 years & do know of what we testify. Have also seen letters from different individuals stating the facts of his death." To assist with her claim, the Rhode Island adjutant general's office forwarded a statement of service to support that Bradley had served and died as a member of Battery D. As was typical of the government bureaucracy, although Cleora's pension request was received on March 25, 1864, it moved slowly through the government process. It was not until March 1, 1866, that she was "admitted" and began collecting eight dollars per month, plus an additional six dollars for her three children under sixteen.<sup>29</sup>

Unable to support herself and children on fourteen dollars per month, Cleora returned to the Caledonia County courthouse on September 5, 1866, to request an increase to her pension. Cleora claimed that she had not remarried and had not "abandoned the support of any of the children nor permitted any one of the same to be adopted" since her husband died. A local judge attested to her request and sent it to Washington. The pension clerks denied her request for an increase.<sup>30</sup>

Surprisingly, only a week after filing for an increase in her pension, Cleora remarried. On September 12, 1866, she married William A. White, a forty-year-old farmer from Danville. The motivations are unknown, but the union would provide Cleora and her children with a place to reside, as well as the stability of an income greater than fourteen dollars per month. Although she was no longer eligible for a widow's pension, the three Norris children remained eligible to receive orphan benefits until they turned sixteen.<sup>31</sup>

After her remarriage, now calling herself Cleora White, she moved to Danville. From the pension records, it appears that Cleora left her three children in the custody of their grandfather, Solomon Gerry, who became the "guardian of said minors." While their mother lived in Danville, Eppa, Marietta, and Salmon lived with their grandfather in Walden. Acting on their behalf, Solomon hoped to obtain additional

pension benefits for his three grandchildren. The declaration was filed on January 7, 1867, and was likewise forwarded to Washington to be added to Bradley Norris's growing pension file. Although residing in Marshfield when the war broke out, the three Norris children had all been born in Walden, and it was the town clerk of Walden, Hiram Perkins, who sent an affidavit along with the declaration that these were the children of Bradley and Cleora Norris. Surprisingly, although Cleora had previously received payment for her husband's service, a clerk at the Pension Bureau demanded evidence of the service of Bradley J. Norris. The evidence was provided and on March 4, 1867, Solomon Gerry began receiving a check for fourteen dollars per month which was sent to the courthouse in Danville. The payments continued until September 13, 1876, when Salmon Norris turned sixteen.<sup>32</sup>

While her children were placed under the guardianship of their grandfather, Cleora remained married to William A. White; no children were born of the union. The marriage lasted until March 9, 1880, when he died in Walden. Cleora did not remain a widow for long. On August 31, 1880, she married for a third time, this time to Warren Rollins, a thirty-three-year-old farmer from Walden; it was his first marriage. Now Cleora Rollins, her third marriage, again childless, proved to be her longest, lasting until Warren Rollins died on April 1, 1926.<sup>33</sup>

A widow for the third time, and now residing in Cabot, Vermont, Cleora again filed for a widow's pension, based on her marriage nearly sixty years earlier to Bradley J. Norris. With the passage of generous pension laws in the 1890s, Cleora, although married twice after the death of her first husband, could nevertheless collect a pension based on his Civil War service. Cleora filed a "Declaration for Remarried Widow's Pension" on August 26, 1926. Now eighty-nine years old, Cleora stated, "On account of having lost all records in fires the exact date of enlistment cannot be found. For the same reason the pension number is also missing. His Captains name was William W. Buckley."

Cleora attached the marriage and death certificates of her two other husbands and sent the packet to Washington for review. Furthermore, she included two affidavits from neighbors who stated that she had not remarried for a fourth time and had remained married to both husbands until they died. Again, the pension adjudicators scrutinized her claim, writing to the town clerk in Cabot to confirm the information sent by Cleora. Town Clerk B. G. Rogers replied with the confirmation and wrote, "I trust they are what you desire to complete the application." On September 3, 1926, Cleora began to receive fifty dollars per month. The money was paid out until April 19, 1929, when Cleora W.

Rollins was “dropped from the rolls because of death.” She was buried in the Cabot Village Cemetery, next to her third husband.<sup>34</sup>

Surprisingly, the name of Bradley J. Norris is not recorded on the Civil War monuments in either Craftsbury, the town where he was born, Walden, the town of residence when he enlisted, or Albany, the town where his cenotaph is located. In 1871, the name “B. J. Norris” was inscribed on the Rhode Island Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Monument in Providence as an official Civil War fatality from Rhode Island, even though Norris had been born and raised in Vermont. Perhaps General William Tecumseh Sherman summed up this case best when he stated. “I think I understand what military fame is; to be killed on the field of battle and have your name misspelled in the newspapers.”<sup>35</sup> In death, Bradley J. Norris was forever remembered as a Rhode Islander and not a Green Mountain Boy.<sup>36</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> George G. Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War: A History of the Part Taken by the Vermont Soldiers and Sailors in the War for the Union, 1861-5*. 2 vols. (Burlington, VT: Free Press Association, 1886-88), 2: 799-800.

<sup>2</sup> Steward H. Holbrook, *The Yankee Exodus: An Account of Migration from New England* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 123-127; Lewis D. Stillwell, *Migration from Vermont* (1948; reprint, Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society and Rutland, VT: Academy Books, 1983), 216.

<sup>3</sup> William Marvel, *Race of the Soil: The Ninth New Hampshire Regiment in the Civil War* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing, 1988), 7, 214, 218; author visit to Jericho Center Cemetery, March 8, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> James R. Fuller, *Men of Color, to Arms!: Vermont African-Americans in the Civil War* (San Jose, CA: IUniversity Press, 2001), 25-26.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel B. Pettengill, *The College Cavaliers: A Sketch of the Service of a Company of College Students in the Union Army in 1862* (Chicago: H. McAllaster & Co., 1883); *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Rhode Island, For the Year 1865* (Providence, RI: Providence Press, 1866), 421-427. For more information on the College Cavaliers, refer to the College Cavaliers Papers, Norwich University Special Collections, Northfield, Vermont.

<sup>6</sup> William P. Hopkins, *The Seventh Regiment Rhode Island Volunteers in the Civil War: 1862-1865* (Providence, RI: Snow & Farnum, 1903), 88, 488; *Narragansett Times*, 1 July 1863; Uz Cameron, Pension File, WC44431, National Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Hopkins, *Seventh Rhode Island*, 1-3; Soldier Bounty Payment Records, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, RI.

<sup>8</sup> Hamilton Child, *Gazetteer and Business Directory of Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, VT* (Syracuse, NY: Journal Office, 1883), 44-45.

<sup>9</sup> For the best discussion of salaries and prices in this era, refer to Ernest L. Bogart, *Peacham: The Story of a Vermont Hill Town* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1948). On wages and bounties, see Marvel, *Race of the Soil*, 5-8.

<sup>10</sup> Birth Records, Albany, Vermont, Albany Town Clerk, Albany, Vermont; Betty Davison Post, *The Founding Families of Craftsbury, Vermont* (Lakewood, CO: The Author, 2006), 200-202.

<sup>11</sup> 1850 U.S. Census, Town of Albany, Caledonia County, Vermont, RG 29, National Archives; Robert F. Balivet, “The Vermont Sheep Industry: 1811-1880,” *Vermont History* 33 (January 1965), 243-246.

<sup>12</sup> Cleora Norris, Widow’s Declaration for Pension, 8 March 1864, Bradley J. Norris Pension File, WC665889, National Archives; 1860 U.S. Census, Town of Marshfield, Washington County, Vermont, RG 29, National Archives; *A History of Walden, Vermont* (Randolph Center, VT: Greenhills Books, 1986), 21-55: 178-184: 195.

<sup>13</sup> Ninth Vermont Volunteers, Recruiting Poster, Danville Historical Society, Danville, VT; Howard Coffin, *Nine Months to Gettysburg: Stannard’s Vermonters and the Repulse of Pickett’s Charge* (Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press, 1997), 15-20; *Walton’s Daily Journal* (Montpelier, VT), 18 August 1862.

<sup>14</sup> George B. Peck, *Historical Address Delivered at the Dedication of the Memorial Tablet on the Arsenal, Benefit Street, Corner of Meeting, Providence, R.I., Thursday July 19, 1917* (Providence: Rhode Island Print Co., 1917), 5-15.



<sup>15</sup> Benedict, *Vermont in the Civil War*, 1: 22-25; Howard Coffin to Robert Grandchamp, 30 November 2017; *The Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont, at the October Session, 1861* (Montpelier, VT: E. P. Walton, 1861), 61-62. A careful search of the town clerk records in Walden and Albany, Vermont, fails to reveal any surviving records regarding town bounty payments to soldiers from those towns.

<sup>16</sup> Enlistment Records of First Rhode Island Light Artillery, Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, RI; Earl Fenner, *The History of Battery H, First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery, in the War to Preserve the Union, 1861-1865* (Providence, RI: Snow & Farnham, 1894), 1-11.

<sup>17</sup> Elisha Dyer, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, for the Year 1865*. 2 vols. (Providence, RI: E. L. Freeman & Sons, 1893), 2:834, 945; *Providence Daily Post*, 1-15 December 1862.

<sup>18</sup> George C. Sumner, *Battery D, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, in the Civil War, 1861-1865* (Providence, RI: Rhode Island Printing Company, 1897), 1-11; Ezra K. Parker, *Campaign of Battery D, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, in Kentucky and East Tennessee* (Providence, RI: Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society, 1913), 1-30.

<sup>19</sup> Sumner, *Battery D*, 112-124; Earl J. Hess, *The Knoxville Campaign: Burnside and Longstreet in East Tennessee* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Parker, *Campaign of Battery D in Kentucky and East Tennessee*, 1-28; Sumner, *Battery D*, 112-124.

<sup>21</sup> Inventory of the effects of Bradley J. Norris, 5 January 1864, Returns of Battery D, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, Adjutant General's Papers, Rhode Island State Archives.

<sup>22</sup> Interment Records, Knoxville National Cemetery, Quartermaster General's Papers, RG 92.8.1, National Archives; Death Record for Bradley J. Norris, Albany Town Clerk; personal visit of author to Albany Village Cemetery, 31 October 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas C. Dudley to Clerora Norris, 9 March 1864, Norris Pension File.

<sup>24</sup> William W. Buckley to Cleora Norris, 12 April 1864, Norris Pension File.

<sup>25</sup> Cleora Norris to James Y. Smith, 14 April 1864, Executive Correspondence, Rhode Island State Archives; *Providence Daily Post*, 1-15 December 1862.

<sup>26</sup> Sumner, *Battery D*, 159; James Y. Smith, *Special Message of His Excellency James Y. Smith, Governor of Rhode Island, to the General Assembly, January, 1866* (Providence, RI: Providence Press Co., 1866)

<sup>27</sup> *New York Times*, 12 August 1862.

<sup>28</sup> Theda Skocpol, "America's First Social Security System," in *The Civil War Veteran: A Historical Reader*. Ed. Larry M. Logue and Michael Barton (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 179-199; Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 143-153; 161-162.

<sup>29</sup> Widow's Declaration and Statement of Service, both in Norris Pension File.

<sup>30</sup> Widow's Claim for an Increase of Pension, 5 September 1866, Norris Pension File.

<sup>31</sup> Copy of Marriage Record, William A. White and Cleora Norris, Norris Pension File, original at Danville Town Clerk.

<sup>32</sup> Orphan Pension Declaration of Solomon Gerry, 7 January 1867, Hiram Perkins affidavit, and Certificate of 4 March 1867, all in Norris Pension File.

<sup>33</sup> Death Certificate of William A. White, 9 March 1880, Marriage License of Warren Rollins and Cleora White, 31 August 1880, and Death Certificate of Warren Rollins, 1 April 1926, all at Walden Town Clerk.

<sup>34</sup> Cleora Rollins, Declaration for Remarried Widow's Pension, 31 August 1926 and affidavits of Etta N. Marsh and Harvey Rogers, Norris Pension File; Cleora W. Rollins, Death Certificate, 19 April 1929, Cabot Town Hall, Cabot, VT.

<sup>35</sup> Although widely reported, this quote first appears in *Report of the Proceedings of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee at the Seventeenth Meeting, Held at Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota, Hotel Lafayette, August 13th and 14th, 1884* (Cincinnati, OH: The Society, 1893), 113.

<sup>36</sup> This author has personally visited the monuments in Albany, Walden, and Craftsbury, Vermont. *Caledonian Record*, 17 August 1922; Augustus Woodbury and Sarah Helen Whitman, *Proceedings at the Dedication of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument: Erected in Providence by the State of Rhode Island: with the Oration by the Rev. Augustus Woodbury, and the Memorial Hymn by Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman: to Which Is Appended a List of the Deceased Soldiers and Sailors Whose Names Are Sculptured Upon the Monument* (Providence, RI: A. Crawford Greene, 1871), 62.