

**AROOSTOOK WAR: HISTORICAL SKETCH
AND ROSTER OF COMMISSIONED
OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN CALLED
INTO SERVICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF
THE NORTHEASTERN FRONTIER OF
MAINE, FROM FEBRUARY TO MAY, 1839**

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Aroostook War: Historical Sketch and Roster of Commissioned Officers and Enlisted Men Called Into Service for the Protection of the Northeastern Frontier of Maine, from February to May, 1839 by Various

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AROOSTOOK WAR.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

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Roster of Commissioned Officers
and Enlisted Men

CALLED INTO SERVICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE
NORTHEASTERN FRONTIER OF MAINE.

FROM FEBRUARY TO MAY,

1839.

Published in accordance with Council Order passed November 24, 1903.

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1904

HISTORICAL SKETCH AND ROSTER OF COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN OF THE DRAFTED MILITIA OF MAINE, CALLED INTO ACTUAL SERVICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF ITS NORTHEASTERN FRONTIER, FROM FEBRUARY TO MAY, 1839.

THE AROOSTOOK WAR, 1839.

Among the many important events in the early history of the State of Maine one of much interest is that known as the Aroostook War, a brief sketch of which is given below.

By the treaty of 1783, at the close of the Revolutionary struggle, one-half of the St. John's river belonged to Maine. * * * After the war of 1812, the British claimed the whole of the upper part of the vast valley of the St. John. They demanded all the land above the forty-sixth degree of north latitude, which included about one-third of what was supposed to be the territory of Maine. There was at this time, on the north or eastern side of the river, an American settlement * * * extending for a distance of nearly twenty miles. The inhabitants were principally of French descent, and had emigrated to that American region when the English took possession of Arcadia. This plantation had been incorporated as the town of Madawaska, and a representative was sent to the legislature of Maine. In June, 1837, Congress sent an officer to Madawaska to take a census of the people, and at the same time to distribute the surplus money which had accumulated in the United States treasury. A British constable arrested this agent and carried his prisoner to the nearest English shire town. But the sheriff there, alarmed, refused to receive the prisoner, and he returned to Madawaska, and continued to prosecute his mission.

Governor Harvey of New Brunswick, hearing of the distribution of money to the people, assumed that it was a bribe to induce the inhabitants to continue their allegiance to the United States. He therefore ordered the agent to be re-arrested and he was lodged in Frederickton jail. Governor Dunlap, at that time governor of Maine, issued a general order announcing that the soil of our State had been invaded by a foreign power. The militia were therefore called upon to hold themselves in readiness for active service. A few weeks after, the British authorities set the imprisoned agent at liberty. Both parties wisely decided to refer the question to arbitration.

By the convention between the United States and Great Britain, at London, September 29, 1827, it was agreed through the plenipotentiaries of the two powers, that points of difference between the commissioners appointed according to the fifth article of the treaty of Ghent, should be referred to some friendly sovereign or state. They finally made a choice of William, King of Netherlands, as arbiter of questions submitted under that treaty.

The question in regard to the northeastern boundary being referred to him, he decided that the line should run about half-way between the boundaries claimed by the two powers.

The question submitted was "Which of the two boundaries is the one authorized by the treaty?" and he decided in favor of a line which the treaty did not indicate, and of which neither of the parties had thought. The people of Maine were indignant at this decision. The national government, anxious to avoid war, generously offered Maine a million acres of land in Michigan, in exchange for the territory she would thus lose. This offer was declined, and prolonged negotiations ensued. During the years from 1832, when the decision was waived by both the interested parties, until 1842, when Maine assented to a compromise, there had been frequent collisions on the frontier. In 1838, Governor Kent took measures to increase the efficiency of the militia, and General Wool was sent to inspect the fortifications on the Penobscot, the St. Croix and the Kennebec. The line which Maine claimed by the treaty of 1783 was again surveyed. The territory thus in dispute became the prey of plunderers. Soon there was a conflict between the British lumbermen and American officers.

Governor Harvey of New Brunswick issued a proclamation declaring that British territory had been invaded and ordering out a thousand of the militia. Affairs now began to look serious. Immediately fifty volunteers set out from Augusta for the scene of action. At the same time Governor Harvey sent a communication to the governor of Maine, at Augusta, demanding the recall of the American troops from the Aroostook, announcing that he was instructed by the British government to hold exclusive charge over the disputed territory and that he should do so by military force. This aroused the indignation of the people of Maine. The legislature passed a resolve for the protection of the public lands, and appropriated eight hundred thousand dollars to that purpose. A draft was also ordered for ten thousand three hundred and forty-three men from the militia to be ready for immediate action. General Bachelier was commander of the western division of militia. Within a week ten thousand American troops were either in Aroostook county, or on the march there. The national government was roused. Congress passed a bill authorizing the President of the United States to raise fifty thousand troops for the support of Maine, and appropriating ten million dollars to meet the expense, should the governor of New Brunswick fulfil his threat of maintaining exclusive jurisdiction over the territory in dispute. On the fifth of March, General Scott with his staff, reached Augusta. He informed the governor that he was "specially charged with maintaining the peace and safety of the entire northern and eastern frontiers." He took quarters at the Augusta House and entered into correspondence with both Governor Harvey of New Brunswick and Governor Fairfield of Maine, endeavoring to act the part of peacemaker.

Governor Harvey pledged himself that, in prospect of the peaceful settlement of the question between the two nations, he would not take military possession of the territory, or endeavor to expel from it the civil posse or the troops of Maine. Governor Fairfield pledged himself that he would not, without renewed instructions, disturb any of the New Brunswick settlements in the Madawaska region. He agreed to withdraw his troops and leave uninterrupted communication between New Brunswick and Canada.

This settlement brought peace. The prisoners on both sides were set at liberty. In March, the Aroostook region, which

had previously formed a portion of Penobscot and Washington counties, was formed into a new county bearing its original name. It was generally supposed that the prompt military preparations we had made, which gave us the command of the situation, had great influence with the British authorities in securing a peaceful settlement. Although the Aroostook war called for troops which were sent to the scene of disturbance, the outbreak was a bloodless one; nevertheless it was the occasion of great annoyance and the expenditure of large sums of money.

In the year 1842 Lord Ashburton came to Washington, the British ambassador authorized to form a new treaty for the settlement of the boundary. An extra session of the legislature of Maine was called. Commissioners were appointed to confer with Lord Ashburton and Secretary Webster upon this subject. The troublesome question was soon settled. England greatly needed a portion of this territory that there might be free communication between New Brunswick and Canada. Maine surrendered a considerable tract which was of but little value. In compensation the United States received a territory of much greater value, on the borders of Lakes Champlain and Superior. The national government paid Maine one hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the surrender. The State also received two hundred thousand dollars as re-imbusement for the expense she had incurred in defending the integrity of American territory. The Senate of the United States ratified the Ashburton treaty August 20, 1842. By this treaty, which is sometimes called from the negotiations the Webster-Ashburton treaty, arrangements were made for the final settlement of boundaries between the different states and the British possessions in North America.

Much interesting matter in regard to this subject is found in "Abbott's History of Maine." The printed volumes of "Resolves of the State of Maine" contain valuable material connected with those years of open controversy. Other works are by Albert Gallatin, "The Right of the United States to the Northeastern Boundary Claimed by Them," (New York, 1840); Chas. S. Daveis "Report of the Committee on the North Eastern Boundary, Legislative Documents, 1841;" William P. Preble "The Decision of the King of Netherlands" published anonymously, (Portland, 1841).

Following are general orders issued in 1839, which relate to the Aroostook War, also a list of officers in active service at that time and the muster rolls of forty-six companies of infantry and artillery which were called into active service.

STATE OF MAINE.

HEADQUARTERS,
AUGUSTA, February 16, 1839.

General Order, No. 5.

Major General Isaac Hodsdon, third Division, Maine Militia:—You are hereby ordered to detach, forthwith, from the Division under your command, by draft or otherwise one thousand men, properly officered and equipped. This force will rendezvous at Bangor and proceed at the earliest possible moment, to the place occupied by a civil force under the Land Agent on or near the Aroostook river, and render such aid to the Land Agent as may enable him to carry into effect a Resolve of 24th of January, relating to trespassers upon the public lands.

(Signed)

JOHN FAIRFIELD,
Gov. and Commander-in-Chief.

STATE OF MAINE.

HEADQUARTERS,
AUGUSTA, February 17, 1839.

General Order, No. 6.

Major General Hodsdon of the third Division, having been directed by General Orders of the 16th instant, to make a draft of one thousand men from his Division, the detailment will consist of eight hundred and fifty Infantry, Light Infantry and Riflemen, and one hundred and fifty Artillery. The companies will be organized with sixty-four privates, four sergeants, and two musicians. The draft will be required to report themselves to the Major General at Bangor, on Thursday the 21st instant. The Major General will command the detachment in person, and he will detail, in addition to the proper number of Company officers, one Colonel, one Lieutenant Colonel, and one Major of Infantry, and one Major of Artillery, together with the appropriate Staff. General Hodsdon will make immediate requisition by express on the acting Quartermaster General, for such supplies, including military stores, as in his opinion, the nature of the service contemplated may require.

The detachment will be required to appear with the arms and equipments of their respective corps, and with three days' provisions. They will be drafted to serve three months unless sooner discharged.

When the detachment shall have been completed, Major General Hodsdon will forward to the Adjutant General a complete roll of the officers, non-commissioned officers and privates, describing the Brigade, Regiment and Companies from which they were severally taken.