

HISTORY IN OUR OWN BACK YARD

Phil Schlegel

During the past year I had the good fortune to take a couple of classes through the University of Maine at Augusta's Senior College presented by my friend and fellow round table member Mike Bell. One of Mike's recurring themes was to encourage the class participants to take the time to "check out the history in our own back yards."

This past Memorial Day Linda and I started the soggy afternoon at Pine Grove Cemetery in Waterville, paying our respects to the service and sacrifice of William and Edwin Stevens, the sons of Whiting and Mary Stevens of Waterville. William, captain of Co. E, 16th Maine Infantry, was killed by a Confederate sharpshooter at Petersburg on June 19, 1864. Edwin, a Sergeant Major in the 16th Maine, was killed in action at the Battle of Weldon Railroad on August 18, 1864. It seems that we have "adopted" the Stevens brothers to honor and remember the fallen on Memorial Day.



Inspired by a recent newspaper article, we decided to seek out another Civil War veteran's grave, also at Pine Grove Cemetery, that had been carefully rehabilitated. The veteran, Francis W. Haskell, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his service at the Battle of Fair Oaks (also known as Seven Pines), Virginia, on June 1, 1862.

Haskell was born in Benton in 1843. His Civil War service began in the 3rd Maine Regiment of Infantry. A notation on the 3rd Maine muster-out roll indicates that Haskell "Was private Co 'G' from enrollment to March 13th/62. Then Serg't Major. Discharged by promotion as Adj't 19th Maine Reg't July 18th/62."¹ The 3rd Maine was engaged in the hard-fought Battle of Fair Oaks (May 31 – June 1, 1862) on the Union left which successfully received and repelled repeated Confederate attacks. Sergeant Major Haskell's Medal of Honor citation reads:

*Assumed command of a portion of the left wing of his regiment, all the company officers present having been killed or disabled, led it gallantly across a stream and contributed most effectively to the success of the action.*²

The muster-in roll of the 19th Maine Infantry indicates that on July 21, 1862, Haskell was appointed adjutant.³ According to the regiment's muster-out roll, he was "Reassigned and Honorably discharged Feb 6/64."⁴

Memorial Day 2021 turned out to be a remarkable day. We enjoyed the opportunity to explore Civil War history in our own back yard!



Photo by author (May 31, 2021).

1. "Maine, State Archive Collections, 1718-1957," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939X-T7JH-M?cc=1877829&wc=9Y8P-L2N%3A174548501%2C174548502%2C174737101> : 20 May 2014), Maine > Military Records-Civil War > 3rd Infantry and muster-out rolls page 1460-1480 > image 2 of 43; State Archives, Augusta.

2. "Haskell, Frank W.," United States Army [Medal of Honor, Recipients], accessed June 1, 2021, <https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/citations1.html#H>.

3. "Maine, State Archive Collections, 1718-1957," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939N-NJ1T-8?cc=1877829&wc=9Y85-929%3A174548501%2C174548502%2C175014701> : 20 May 2014), Maine > Military Records-Civil War > 19th Infantry and muster-in rolls page 4963-4974 > image 2 of 26; State Archives, Augusta.

4. "Maine, State Archive Collections, 1718-1957," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939N-NJYQ-W?cc=1877829&wc=9Y85-MV3%3A174548501%2C174548502%2C175020301> : 20 May 2014), Maine > Military Records-Civil War > 19th Infantry, muster rolls, Field and Staff, N.C. Officers and Companies A-E page 5010-5020 > image 3 of 24; State Archives, Augusta.

Note: For more information on the Battle of Fair Oaks/Seven Pines see:

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/seven-pines>.