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BRITISH NORTH AMERICANS WHO FOUGHT IN
THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, 1861 - 1865

by

Danny R. Jenkins

Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
M. A. degree in History.

Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa

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UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
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ABSTRACT
BRITISH NORTH AMERICANS WHO FOUGHT IN
THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, 1861 - 1865

Danny R. Jenkins,
University of Ottawa, 1993

Supervisor:
Professor Béatrice Craig

Between 33,000 and 55,000 British North Americans (BNAs) fought in the American Civil War. Historians though, have largely overlooked or misinterpreted the BNAs' contribution. Most historical accounts portray BNAs as mercenaries, bounty jumpers, or as the victims of press gangs. Many works imply that most BNAs were kidnapped, or drugged and hauled while unconscious across the border to "volunteer." We are also told that BNAs expended enormous amounts of energy attempting to secure their discharges, and of necessity, had to be placed under guard to prevent their desertion. Nowhere, however, are we informed about average BNAs. Most were neither victims nor abusers of the American recruitment system. Unfortunately, their large and significant contributions to the Union's war effort are all but lost, as historians have tried to capture the more exciting and extraordinary side of BNA recruitment. Such an unbalanced portrayal of BNAs characterizes them as inferior soldiers, and that is a disservice to both BNAs, and to the units in which they served. Much of the misunderstanding surrounding BNAs stems from the lack of a common definition for BNA, and through a failure by researchers to appreciate the significance of the changing nature of the Civil War soldiers' enlistment motivations. My study, on the other hand, concentrates on average BNAs and, in the process,

tries to come to grips with their true reasons for enlisting. In the end, the payoff is a more balanced depiction of BNA troops; and the discovery that BNAs were not a homogeneous group of men. There were two basic types: those who resided in the United States before their enlistment, and those who crossed the frontier from the British provinces to volunteer. Both types were willing recruits, but otherwise they showed unique characteristics and enrolment behaviour. American resident BNAs enlisted in patterns much like their American neighbours and friends, while British North American resident BNAs were, in the main, driven by the enlistment bounty. The distinction is important if a better understanding of BNAs is to be achieved.

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Kubisch, at the Kitchener Public Library; Bonnie Callen, an archivist at the Wellington County Museum and Archives; Suzanne Rowe Knight, Curator of the Markham District Historical Museum; Rev. B.M. Broderick, St. Michael's Museum Association; and the list goes on. I also would like to thank those institutions, though having little in their records applicable to my topic, that promised to keep watch for anything coming their way, and for publishing my letter for assistance in their newsletters for an even wider circulation.

Also, many individuals sent me material, and copies of letters and diaries written by ancestors who fought in the war to use in my research. Without their response this study would have been difficult to write. Therefore, I take this time to thank Lorne and William Sorge for Augustus Sorg's letters; Bernard and Patricia Breen for material on George Greg; Andrew Gledhill for Alexander Camron's letters; Patricia Orr for her advice on researching in the United States; Willis Weaver for the information on Peter Weaver; Wayne Dow, who sent me microfiche copies of Wentworth Dow's diaries; Dan Johnson, a genealogist from New Brunswick; and many, many others whose time and efforts on my behalf are truly appreciated.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Pati, who now probably knows as much about British North Americans who fought in the American Civil War as I do.

Thanks to all of you.

Dan Jenkins

Spring 1993

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INTRODUCTION

Upwards of 50,000 British North Americans (BNAs) served in the Union armies during the American Civil War.¹ However, published material regarding these men suffers in both its quantity and scope of analysis. Most of the available writings are misleading and distorting, and present BNAs as either soldiers of fortune, lacking any moral fibre, or as helpless victims, forced into the army's ranks. Researchers have too often focused their efforts on the sensational and the exceptional aspects of BNA enlistments, rather than on average BNAs. The result is an unrealistic portrayal of common BNAs: one filled with stereotypes and inaccuracies. Almost entirely missing is any mention of the vast majority who were willing volunteers. The principal aim of this thesis is to restore some balance to the BNAs' story, by finding and presenting common volunteers; to discover who they were, why they enlisted, and what their reactions were to the Civil War experience. Fulfilling these wide objectives requires an in-depth look at the socio-economic background of BNAs, an analysis of their enlistment behaviour, and a study of their letters home. Ultimately, this

¹ James Robertson, Soldiers Blue and Gray (1988; Columbia: Warner Books Inc., 1991) 28, writes that 15,000 Canadians were in the Union ranks; whereas, Benjamin Gould, Investigations in the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers (1869; New York: Arno Press, 1979) 27, writes that 53,532 BNAs were in the Union army. Other accounts give figures between the two, although most estimates fall between 40,000 and 50,000.

study will present a more accurate interpretation of the life and times of BNA soldiers than is currently available.

At the moment, there is some confusion over who BNAs were and why they enlisted. This is partly due to the lack of a common definition for BNA. Historical works regularly employ the term 'Canadian' when discussing BNAs but, since the Dominion of Canada did not exist at the time, it is unclear to whom the term 'Canadian' refers.² Sometimes it seems 'Canadian' includes all those living in British North America; other times it appears Maritimers are excluded. Sometimes 'Canadian' includes people born in British North America, but living in the United States; other times American residents are excluded and, it is never clear if historians count immigrants to the provinces as 'Canadians.' Such a tangled interpretation of who to include ultimately tells us little about BNA volunteers, and serves only to impede research.

To avoid similar confusion, this paper employs a specific definition, and uses the term British North American, rather than Canadian. For the purposes of this study, British North Americans are individuals who were born in one of the British North American provinces of Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, or Newfoundland. Where they resided is not an issue. Thus, individuals living in the United States at the time of their enlistment are included, while immigrants to the British Colonies are not.

One result of not having a standard definition, is confusion as to why BNAs enlisted. Historians often attribute enlistment motives to BNAs that

² Robin Winks, in Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years, (1960; Montreal: Harvest House Ltd., 1971) 180, addresses the confusion over the term 'Canadian'.

are not necessarily accurate. At times, assigned motives are even contradictory. Lois Darroch, for instance, in a 1991 publication, wrote that “the desire to end slavery” “overshadowed” all other motives.³ On the other hand, Robin Winks, in his book Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years, argued that BNAs were either crimped into service, conscripted, or served only to receive the enlistment bounty.⁴ Fred Shannon, in “The Mercenary Factor in the Creation of the Union Army,” likewise saw the bounty as important. He believed ‘Canadians’ could be “induced to cross the border [to] enlist for as little as \$100, which,” he said, “they seldom received.”⁵ On the other hand, Fred Landon wrote, in his book Western Ontario and the American Frontier, that although enlistment bounties attracted many BNAs, “numbers of young Canadians joined either for adventure or because of their belief that they were fighting in a good cause.”⁶ Marcus Hansen, in The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples, wrote that some BNAs enlisted out of sympathy for the Northern cause, but most joined for the sizable bounties. He also stated that French Canadians “sought the excitement offered by the campaigns as a welcome break in the routine of

³ Lois Darroch, “Canadians in the American Civil War”, Ontario History 83.1 (March, 1991): 55.

⁴ Robin Winks, Canada and the United States 180, 184; and “The Creation of a Myth: ‘Canadian’ Enlistments in the Northern Armies During the American Civil War”, The Canadian Historical Review 39.1 (March, 1958): 36.

⁵ Fred Shannon, “The Mercenary Factor in the Creation of the Union Army”, The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 12 (June, 1925 to March, 1926): 535.

⁶ Fred Landon, Western Ontario and the American Frontier (1941, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1967) 214.

life.”⁷ Since none of these historians conducted a thorough examination of BNA enlistments, the result is a confused historical interpretation.

Rather than discussing the majority of BNAs, historians have limited their inquiry to controversial, shocking or exceptional aspects of BNA war-time involvement. Crimping, bounty jumping (the activity whereby men enlisted for money and then deserted, only to enlist somewhere else and repeat their offence), and desertion are favourite topics. For example, in a fourteen page article by Peterson and Hudson, found in Civil War History, entitled “Foreign Recruitment for Union Forces” there are only four sentences devoted to BNAs, and all deal with illegal recruitment practices. There is no mention that volunteers far out-numbered the victims of press gangs.⁸ In fact, whole articles devoted to crimping in Canada are available, but none that deal with the common recruit. The fixation on kidnapping, drugging and other immoral and illegal recruitment practices distorts not only our reading of BNAs, but our understanding of life in British North America. Most accounts imply that BNAs were fools, constantly beguiled by some cunning crimp, or that British colonials lived in terror, never knowing when they would be dragged off to the American side and “volunteered” into the Union army. One would think that it was a daily sight to see BNAs hauled kicking and screaming across the frontier. If true, British North America contained more than its fair share of dupes.⁹ Occasionally there were

⁷ Marcus Lee Hansen, The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples, (1940, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1970) 142.

⁸ Peterson and Hudson, “Foreign Recruitment for Union Forces”, Civil War History 7 (1961): 186.

⁹ See Eugene Murdock, Patriotism Limited, 1862 - 1865. The Civil War Draft and the Bounty System, (Kent State University Press, 1967) 112 - 117; Marguerite Hamer “Luring Canadian Soldiers Into Union Lines During the War Between the States”, Canadian Historical Review 27.2

kidnappings and druggings, but force was not the normal means by which BNAs entered the American service.

In addition to crimping, bounties and bounty jumping are popular topics. Fred Shannon's statement that Canadians could be induced for as little as \$100 to join, and then be tricked out of receiving even that amount, is typical. One or two lines, dropped into the middle of a discussion without any caveats attached to them, portray BNAs as not only mercenary in motive, but stupid as well.

Ella Lonn, author of Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy, did not serve BNAs any better. The sheer size of Lonn's work prevented her from looking closely at specific groups of people, and in particular at BNAs. In the end, Lonn failed to understand them. Her surprise that individuals from British North America considered themselves Nova Scotians, or Canadians, or New Brunswickians, or Prince Edward Islanders before they considered themselves British North Americans is an indication of the depth of her misunderstanding.¹⁰ Did she not know that the British provinces were independent of each other at the time of the American Civil War?

Lonn tended to use BNAs as examples of corruption. She rarely, or never, mentioned them in her chapters dealing with the better qualities of foreign troops. For example, in the chapter entitled "The Regular Army of the United States in 1861," Lonn outlined the positive role played by various

(1946): 150 -162; William Raney "Recruiting and Crimping in Canada for the Northern Forces, 1861 - 1865", The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 9 (June, 1922 to March, 1923): 21 - 33; Helen MacDonald Canadian Public Opinion on the American Civil War (1926; New York: Octagon Books, 1974) 179 - 183; Winks, Canada and the United States 192 to 200; Ella Lonn, Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy (1951; New York: Greenwood Press, 1969) 436 - 478.

¹⁰ Lonn, Foreigners 150.

nationalities in the pre-war American army, but made no mention of the numerous BNAs then in service. In the chapter entitled "Knights-Errant and Soldiers of Fortune" she made no reference to any BNA 'knights' who enlisted to fight for the cause. There were no BNA surgeons listed in the chapter dealing with the special services, though several Union surgeons were BNAs. Lonn did not discuss BNA contributions to the war effort, nor mention the twenty-nine BNA Medal of Honor recipients, nor the several BNAs achieving a general officer rank. Instead, Lonn referred to BNAs when discussing bounty jumping, draft evasion, kidnapping and other crimping activities.¹¹ She also detailed attempts by a few individuals to secure their release from the army through the intercession of Lord Lyons, the British Minister at Washington.¹² When discussing the quality of foreign born troops Lonn gave two examples of poor recruits: one was a BNA.¹³

Robin Winks, a leading historian on matters relating to British North America during the Civil War, maintained the idea that BNAs were mostly unwilling recruits. To Winks, BNAs were either forced into American service, or were mercenary in motive and, once enroled, expended enormous effort in trying to secure a discharge. Winks' thesis though, demanded a particular view of BNA soldiers. His goal was to demonstrate that American - British North American relations during the war was a hot-bed of animosity and distrust.¹⁴ He could not easily do this if 40,000 or more BNAs willingly volunteered. As Winks himself said: "If even the smallest of these figures [40,000] were accepted, it would provide strong support for the contention that

11 Lonn, Foreigners 439, 446, 451, 455, 458 - 464.

12 Lonn, Foreigners 465 - 474.

13 Lonn, Foreigners 486.

14 Winks, "Creation of a Myth," 26; Canada and the United States, Chapter Ten.

the provinces were pro-Northern in sentiment.”¹⁵ Instead, Winks emphasized the more negative aspects of the BNA: crimping, bounty enlistments, bounty jumping, applying for discharge and so on, to show that there was no love lost between the United States and the British provinces. As a result, Winks lost sight of the majority of BNAs -- men neither crimped, conscripted, bounty jumpers, nor shirkers. In fact, there was no analysis of common BNAs in his work. Winks simply stated that:

there were undoubtedly several thousand British North Americans who enlisted in the Northern army because of a desire to help put down slavery, who gave no thought to a discharge, and who served honorably and sometimes with exceptional bravery and skill throughout their term of enlistment or throughout the war.¹⁶

He then offered several examples of honourable BNAs. However, his few positive comments are all but buried in a chapter devoted to less meritorious BNA conduct.

More positive views of BNA soldiers are rare. Lois Darroch though, is one historian who believes that BNAs mainly enlisted to help defeat slavery. Darroch’s evidence is almost wholly derived from letters written by four of her ancestors who served in the Northern armies. The value of these letters cannot be denied, but it is unrealistic to assume that the motives of these four men, and one or two others, represent the 50,000 ‘Canadians’ she says served.

The historians’ concentration on extremes is largely due to the nature of the sources consulted. Political and diplomatic records, specifically the

¹⁵ Winks, Canada and the United States 179.

¹⁶ Winks, Canada and the United States 187.

governor general's records, have supplied the bulk of the evidence. However, information obtained from the governor general's records, or from the records of some other governmental agency, do not fairly depict average BNAs. BNAs would not have announced their enlistment to the government; it was an infringement of the Foreign Enlistment Act for a British subject to enlist in a foreign army.¹⁷ Only BNAs with an exceptional case, who wanted out, or whose parents wanted them out, wrote to the governor general. Those who wrote were not naive, they did not say 'my son volunteered, please help obtain his discharge;' if they had they would have received no help at all. Their letters indicate that chicanery was employed, that 'young Johnny' had been tricked, induced, carried off, led astray or drugged, but in no way had he volunteered. In other words, information found in government records deals with extraordinary, not ordinary BNAs.

Also, historians have not used newspapers to their fullest. Stories concerning crimps are readily picked up on, but BNA letters are overlooked. Robin Winks' study proves a good example. Winks did an outstanding job describing how editors, and perhaps public opinion, was, to varying degrees, anti-Northern in sentiment, but he missed the letters by BNAs printed in the newspapers he examined. Newspapers, to be sure, were not bristling with BNA correspondence, but many letters expressed opinions at odds with the editorials and the crimping stories Winks concentrated on. It is not surprising that his conclusions are negative. The same can be said about the work of other historians.

Available explanations for BNA involvement also fail to fully appreciate the importance of the year in which enlistments took place.

¹⁷ Winks, Canada and the United States 182.

Enlistment motives changed over the course of the war, and mono-causal explanations for BNA involvement are inadequate. For example, there is wide agreement among scholars that BNAs volunteered only to receive the enlistment bounty; however, this opinion does not explain the thousands of BNA enlistments that occurred in 1861 and 1862, years when bounties were inconsequential. Equally inadequate is the opinion that the defeat of slavery was the main driving force behind BNA recruitment. The desire to end slavery does not explain the surge in BNA enlistments that occurred in 1865, when the war was nearly over. The majority of men who wanted an end to slavery would certainly have enlisted before then.

Moreover, where BNAs lived had an impact on when and why they enlisted; yet, apart from Winks, historians have not taken residency into account when assigning motives to BNAs. Those BNAs who were long-term residents of the United States displayed enlistment behaviour far different from that shown by BNAs who crossed the frontier to volunteer. BNAs living in the United States were closer to the events leading up to the rebellion, and may even have participated in the election that sparked the secession of South Carolina, the first State to break from the Union. These BNAs would have felt emotions and pressures similar to those affecting their American neighbours and friends. It was, after all, their homes that were directly threatened by the crisis. BNAs residing north of the border could not possibly have felt the same fears, worries, enthusiasms, pressures and emotions towards the war and the issues involved. As such, distinctions must be made between those BNAs domiciled in the United States before the war, and those who entered the country once the conflict was actively engaged, if meaningful conclusions are to be drawn.

Furthermore, there are no studies available that outline the BNAs' social, economic, and political circumstances, though such influences undoubtedly played a significant role in their enlistment decisions. A wealthy doctor, for example, would not likely have found a \$500 enlistment bounty a sufficient inducement to enlist, but he might have held the defence of some principle -- say, the defeat of slavery -- as ample cause. An unemployed labourer, having never seen a black man, probably would not have enlisted to help free slaves in the deep south, but would likely have viewed a \$500 enlistment bounty as very attractive.

We must also recognize that there were long-term factors pushing and pulling BNAs into the United States, and ultimately into the army. Hitherto, more immediate causes for BNA enlistments have been the focus: bounties, adventure seeking, prestige and rank, the preservation of the Union, and so forth. However, from the 1840s onward, the British North American colonies witnessed a massive exodus of its population to the United States. By 1860 there were nearly 250,000 British North Americans living there, a huge number, representing 7.9% of the total colonial population. By 1870, Canadians living in the United States numbered almost 500,000, or 13.4% of the Canadian population. The year 1900 saw nearly 1.2 million Canadians making their homes in the United States; that is, 22% of the Canadian born population had left Canada.¹⁸ BNAs were part of the early migrations, and need to be considered in that context. Viewing them in isolation, and without respect for the conditions they faced, has contributed to the current misunderstandings plaguing BNAs. The larger movement may provide clues to explain why BNAs volunteered. Therefore, when discussing BNA

¹⁸ William Marr and Donald Paterson, Canada: An Economic History, (Toronto: Gage Publishing Limited, 1980) 179.

enlistment behaviour, we should consider both the short-term elements affecting decisions, and the larger environment in which those decisions were made.

A revised view of the BNA is clearly in order: one that deals with common recruits, not with extraordinary cases. Only after identifying 'normal' BNAs can critical conclusions be made. To do this, the subject will be approached in two ways. Chapter One will attempt to discover, through a statistical examination of BNAs enrolled in New York State, who BNAs were, and why they volunteered. Part of this requires our determining the number of BNAs in question, and an analysis of the 'average' BNAs' socio-economic background. It also entails a study of BNA enlistment behaviour. Explanations offered for BNA enrolment will then have the benefit of statistical backing. As statistics cannot capture all the diverse human elements involved in decision making, an analysis of BNA correspondence is necessary. Chapter Two makes full use of BNA letters, adding flesh and blood to the numbers presented in the previous chapter. From the letters we learn first hand why BNAs joined. We also learn what the war experiences were like for British subjects in the Union army. We will see BNAs for what they were, and not for what we want them, or imagine them, to have been. Combined, the two chapters fulfil the larger goal of this paper: to present a balanced picture of the BNA. The study of British North Americans who fought in the American Civil War is a vast topic, and I make no claims that everything needing to be said can be found in this paper -- far from it. This is only the beginning, a first glimpse at a group of people too long overlooked.

CHAPTER 1

THE BNA: A STATISTICAL PROFILE

1.1 The Sources

This chapter includes an estimate of the number of BNAs enroled, as well as an analysis of their residency, pre-war occupations, age at enlistment, marital status, education levels, and enlistment behaviour. It reveals the existence of two basic 'types' of BNA: those who lived in the British provinces prior to their enlistment, and those who were residents of the United States before signing-up. Their differences become especially apparent when examining motives for enlistment. BNAs who crossed the border to enlist showed opposite enlistment patterns from those BNAs already living in the United States when the war began; a single, blanket motive simply does not fit the BNAs. In addition, the analysis provides information about a population larger than BNAs enroled in the Union army; the enlisted men represent a cross-section of the male BNA community then living in the United States. Consequently, what emerges is a partial description of who in the British provinces migrated to America in the mid-nineteenth century.

To keep this project manageable, the analysis focused on men who enlisted in seven New York State Counties: St. Lawrence, Erie, Clinton, Niagara, Onieda, Albany, and New York. I hoped that these seven counties would offer a good mix of BNAs enlisting in New York State. The first four

counties listed are all border counties. Onieda and Albany Counties are middle to upper New York State counties, while New York County is further south and touches the Atlantic Ocean. Initially, I hoped that New York County would contain enlistments by Maritimers. I found only forty-seven such enlistments in all seven counties. Maritimers were more heavily represented in the New England States, a region with which they shared closer economic, geographic, historic and cultural ties.¹ The results obtained in this paper then, may not fairly reflect Maritime enlistments. New York BNAs stand a good chance of being representative of Upper and Lower Canadian BNAs. Twenty-two percent of all BNAs living in the loyal states in 1861 resided in New York State. In addition, being a border state, New York would have attracted many volunteers from the provinces.²

Fortunately, the New York State Archives holds several record groups ideally suited for this study. At the beginning of the war, federal enrolment records did not call for information about a soldier's place of birth, frustrating the efforts of historians to study particular peoples. The State government though, kept its own records, which include lists of names and birth places for soldiers who had enrolled in New York State. The laws of New York required

town clerks...to compile a complete record of all men comprising the town's quota of troops furnished to the United States. These records were

-
- ¹ Daniel F. Johnson "To Author," June 10, 1992. Mr. Johnson, a certified genealogist from New Brunswick, located 2,652 Maritimers in Maine regiments alone. I came across 80 to 100 names of Nova Scotians serving in Massachusetts units.
- ² In total, 2,106 BNAs were found in the counties studied as follows: 72 in Albany, 595 in Clinton, 205 in Erie, 127 in Onieda, 85 in New York, 158 in Niagara, and 864 in St. Lawrence.

to contain biographical material pertaining to each man's civilian and military careers.³

To this end, town clerks received a standard form, issued by the Bureau of Military Record, to be completed for each soldier. The resulting record is known as "The Town Clerks' Registers of Officers, Soldiers, and Seamen Composing the Quotas of Troops Furnished to the United States During the Civil War, 1861 - 1865," hereafter referred to as the Town Clerks' Registers. "The [Town Clerks' Registers] provide the individual's full name; residence; date and place of birth; rank; regiment and company; dates of enlistment; amount of bounty paid; marital status; and previous occupation." Moreover, the Town Clerks' Registers "are arranged alphabetically by county and therein alphabetically by name of city, town, or village," thereby easing research.⁴

Unfortunately, and contrary to the law, the Town Clerks' Registers do not contain the names of all the enlisted men, so other records had to be consulted. Also scanned for BNAs was the "Register of Officers and Enlisted Men Mustered into the Federal Military or Naval Service During the Civil War, 1861 - 1865," hereafter called the Registers. The Registers, like the Town Clerks' Registers, are arranged alphabetically by county, and provide "both military and civil information" on men mustered into federal service. They contain similar data, plus references to an individual's voting status.

Much of the information...was compiled from questionnaires distributed by the Bureau [of

³ Chapter 690 of the Laws of New York, 1865 as quoted in "Inventory to Civil War Records in the New York State Archives" (New York: New York State Archives, 1987) 25 - 26.

⁴ Inventory, 26, 27.

Military Record] to the soldiers themselves, friends, relatives, medical officers,...and local officials... probably between 1863 and 1867.⁵

By combining the material gathered from the Registers with that gathered from the Town Clerks' Registers, a fairly complete dossier emerged for those BNAs enlisting in the seven counties studied. It includes information on 2,106 BNAs.

The "Abstracts of Muster Rolls for Substitutes Unassigned to any Unit During the Civil War, 1861 - 1865" contained information on a further 269 BNAs. Substitutes were those men who, for a price, agreed to take the place of men conscripted into service. BNAs found in this record were not included in most of the analytical portions of this paper, because these particular men, for various reasons, had not been assigned to any regiment, nor taken part in actual combat. They are included in studies focusing specifically on BNAs as substitute soldiers.

There are several other Civil War registers and record groups at the New York State Archives. Most do not indicate nativity, and are only useful for gathering information on specific soldiers. Having few names to begin with, such records proved ill suited to the needs of this paper.

The 2,106 men found are probably not all the BNAs who enrolled in the seven counties. If, for example, clerks left the 'place of birth' line blank -- and this was often the case -- there was no reasonable means available to determine nativity. The accuracy of the count depended upon this one line, and every blank space represented a possible BNA lost to the tally. Also, the Town Clerks' Register for New York County is missing from the collection,

⁵ Inventory, 27.

being either misplaced over the years, or never undertaken. If the records were more complete, the total number of BNAs found might have been substantially higher.

The fragmentary nature of the records affected more than just the 'place of birth' line. Some clerks were extremely thorough, detailing each soldier, others were not so professional. Thus, the quality of the sources varies from town to town, and county to county. Data on age, for instance, is available for only 1,775 of the men in the corpus. Complicating age statistics further is the fact that the Town Clerks' Registers list years of birth, while the Registers record ages. Unfortunately, the Registers do not state to which year the ages apply. The ages given then, may refer to age at enlistment or discharge, or to age at the time the questionnaire was distributed, or to age at last birthday, and so forth. However, when eliminating duplicate BNA entries from the count, one comparison made was between the year of birth, as listed in the Town Clerks' Registers, and the age as recorded in the Registers. The results suggest that the ages listed in the Registers are generally the ages of the soldiers in 1865.

Moreover, it was not always possible to combine material found in the Town Clerks' Registers with information gathered from the Registers. Only the Town Clerks' Registers, for instance, contained residential information. Therefore, only the 1,080 individuals found in the Town Clerks' Registers were used to study residency, rather than all 2,106. Similarly, the Registers alone supplied details on BNA voting status. Thus, only the Registers and its 1,196 BNAs were usable for studies requiring this information. In both cases only BNAs with known enlistment dates were used, as most of the analysis required enrolment dates. This reduced the net number of usable BNAs to 1,045 in the Town Clerks' Registers, and 1,074 in the Registers.

There were 170 BNAs found in both the Town Clerks' Registers and the Registers. They are included in studies using one or the other source. Studies that require information contained in the Town Clerks' Registers and the Registers be combined have not counted the 170 twice. Detection and elimination of duplicate entries however, proved easier said than done. Is, for example, William H. Tabra the same person as W. H. Tabrrah? Is Louis Tromble the same person as Lewis Tromblee and Louis Trombly? Also, those who re-enlisted are recorded once, and then at the earliest enlistment date. Individuals who enlisted more than once, but under a different name, could not be identified.

1.2 How Many BNAs Were There?

Nobody knows how many BNAs took part in the American Civil War. Benjamin Gould, in his 1869 release, Investigations in the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers, estimated that 53,532 BNAs served.⁶ Up to the late 1950s, tradition had 40,000 to 50,000 BNAs fighting for the North. Robin Winks however, took issue with these estimates and, in 1958 released an article entitled "Creation of a Myth: 'Canadian' Enlistments in the Northern Armies During the American Civil War," debunking their validity. He reiterated his views two years later in his book, Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years. In both cases, Winks attacked the accuracy of the traditional figures by exposing the faulty methodologies used in

⁶ Benjamin Gould, Investigations in the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers (1869; New York: Arno Press, 1979) 27.

compiling them. He showed how historians who quoted figures of 40,000, 48,000 and 53,000 had little, or no evidence on which to base such claims. His point was clear: commonly held estimates are unreliable, and consequently unusable. However, Winks did not supply a revised number, only vague estimates that "many" and "several thousand" BNAs served.⁷ Nevertheless, since his publications, opinion has been split over the actual number of BNAs enrolled. Lois Darroch, in 1991, wrote that 50,000 'Canadians' served. Andrew Moxley and Tom Brooks, co-authors of "Drums Across the Border, Canadians in the American Civil War," an article published in Esprit de Corps, Canadian Military, Then and Now, also wrote that 50,000 'Canadians' enlisted.⁸ On the other hand, John C. Kendall, writing in 1975, wrote that Winks had "virtually demolished" the notion that so many BNAs served in the Northern ranks. Kendall though, like Winks, did not give an estimate of his own.⁹ James Robertson, in his 1988 study on Civil War soldiers, reduced the number of 'Canadians' who served to 15,000.¹⁰ As a student of BNA involvement in the Civil War, deciding between 50,000 and 15,000 is not easy, a situation made more difficult as neither side explained how they derived their totals, and, except for Winks, none defined 'Canadian.'¹¹

⁷ Robin Winks, Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years, (1960; Montreal: Harvest House Ltd., 1971) 184, 187.

⁸ Lois Darroch, "Canadians in the American Civil War", Ontario History 83.1 (March, 1991): 55; Andrew Moxley and Tom Brooks, "Drums Across the Border, Canadians in the American Civil War," Esprit de Corps, Canadian Military, Then and Now, 1.6, (November, 1991): 59.

⁹ John C. Kendall, "The New York City Press and Anti - Canadianism: A New Perspective On the Civil War Years," Journalism Quarterly, (1975): 523.

¹⁰ James Robertson, Soldiers Blue and Gray (1988; Columbia: Warner Books Inc., 1991) 28.

¹¹ It is unknown whether the figures given refer to total enlistments, including re-enlistments, or to actual numbers. Also, historians discuss

However, a closer reading of Winks' work reveals a position not as strong as it first appears. As mentioned in the Introduction, Winks' thesis shaped his image of the BNAs. It also influenced his estimate of the number of BNAs recruited. Winks counted only those men who resided in British North America prior to their enlistment as BNAs, and discounted all those living in the US at the time. Given the nature of his thesis this was a fair definition. "The British North American provinces," he wrote, "can hardly be given credit for furnishing men who came to the United States to work long before the Civil War and who were, like most Northerners, conscripted into the army."¹² Whether he included immigrants, or just men born in the provinces, is not clear. What is clear is that Winks did not use place of birth as his defining principle. However, defining nationality by residency is not the convention in Civil War studies. Place of birth is the standard determinant. By discounting BNAs residing in the United States, Winks probably removed 30,000 to 40,000 men from his count.¹³

Winks' failure to offer an alternative number further weakens his position. He must have appreciated this point, for he spent several pages defending his failure to do so. He pointed out that place of birth was not required on early enlistment records, thus preventing an exact count. French

enlistments expressed as a three year standard. For example, if four nine month enlistments equal one three year enlistment, the number of enlistments occurring is thought of as one three year term. The question for BNAs becomes: are the estimates given based on a three year standard, or are they actual enlistments? The authors do not say.

¹² Robin Winks, "The Creation of a Myth: 'Canadian' Enlistments in the Northern Armies During the American Civil War," The Canadian Historical Review 39.1 (March, 1958): 36. Also, most Northerners were not conscripted into the army, only about 46,000 entered the army that way.

¹³ See pages twenty-one to twenty-four for my discussion on the possible number of BNAs enrolled.

Canadians, he said, could not be counted because "Often the officers who made the lists were ill-educated in English and knew nothing of French, so that spellings on the forms do not reveal whether a recruit was of French descent or not." For the remaining BNAs, he stated that recruiting agents "filled in the forms with haphazard guesses of their own," and that recruiters "changed or falsified" information "in order to fill state or town quotas." He crowned his case for not supplying a number with a document published in 1896 by the United States Pension and Records Office. That document states: "no compilation has ever been made by this [War] department showing the nativity of the whole number of men accepted for military service during the late civil war." Thus, Winks argued, no available, or reliable figures exist. He concluded by saying that it is a "myth" that thousands of British North Americans served in the Northern armies, and that such a position "lacks any sound basis outside the realm of wishful thinking."¹⁴ This argument, combined with his criticism of previous methodologies, creates an impression that the traditional 40,000 to 50,000 estimated BNA enlistments are wrong.

Winks' criticism of the sources holds wider ramifications than simply its effect on the tally of BNAs. If the records are so notoriously poor, how have historians generated figures for other national groups?¹⁵ Does Winks' evaluation hold true for other peoples? Does he mean that estimates for all other nationalities are wrong, and that we should disregard the work of those

¹⁴ Winks, "Creation of a Myth" 39; Canada and the United States 180 - 185.

¹⁵ Germans: 200,000; Irish: 150,000; English: 45,000. See Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank (1952; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) 307 - 308; James Robertson, Soldiers Blue and Gray, 27 - 28; Ella Lonn, Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy, (1951; New York: Greenwood Press, 1969) 581 - 582.

who offer such counts? Should we not try to come up with an estimate? It is, after all, the historian's lot to deal with inaccurate and incomplete records. If, as Winks said, an accurate count cannot be made, how does he know that the 40,000 to 50,000 figures are mythical? Although Winks demonstrated the weakness of earlier conclusions, he does not prove them wrong.

Without counting actual enlistments, one can still make a rough estimate of the number of BNAs enroled. Extrapolating from the number of BNAs living in the Northern States is one method. About 246,940 British North Americans resided in the loyal states in 1861, constituting a large pool from which to draw recruits.¹⁶ Forty-nine percent of the total population for the seven counties studied were male.¹⁷ If the proportion of males among BNAs was similar, there would have been 121,000 males of British North American birth living in the United States in 1861.¹⁸ About 66%, or 80,000 would have been of military age.¹⁹ Of course, not all would have enlisted. Generally, about 50% of eligible Americans served at one time or another.²⁰ Historians agree though, that foreigners were under-represented in the Union ranks. Foreigners made up 30% of the population, yet accounted for only 25% of the enlistments. That is, only 42% of foreigners of military age enlisted.²¹ If we assume BNAs had the same enlistment rate, then about

¹⁶ Lonn, Foreigners 664.

¹⁷ "Population by Age and Sex," United States Census, 1860, 322.

¹⁸ This is a conservative estimate, as the majority of people leaving the colonies at this time were single males.

¹⁹ Gould, Anthropological Statistics 3. Gould wrote that 66% of male immigrants were between 18 and 45. He made no distinction as to nativity.

²⁰ Michael Barton, rev. of We Need Men: The Union Draft in the Civil War, by James W. Geary, American Historical Review 97.5 (December 1992): 1598.

²¹ Calculation: 50% of eligible males * 25/30 = 41.66% (42%).

34,000 BNAs of military age, who were also residents of the United States, should have found themselves in the army at some point.²² It should be remembered that this figure does not include BNAs who crossed the frontier to enlist during the course of the rebellion, meaning that the number of BNAs enrolled could be much higher still.

A second way to estimate the number of BNAs is to apply a 'Medal of Honor' ratio. Twenty-nine BNAs received the Medal of Honor for their Civil War services.²³ A total of 1,200 such medals were awarded.²⁴ This means that 2.417% of the medals were bestowed on BNAs.²⁵ If BNAs were honoured in proportion to their numbers, and at a rate equal to the Union army, then BNAs must have composed 2.417% of the Union army. Knowing that the Union army numbered about 2 to 2.3 million men, it must have contained between 48,000 and 55,000 BNAs.²⁶ Applying this formula to lower estimates proves their unlikelihood. For example, James Robertson's figure of 15,000 'Canadians' does not make sense when compared to the Medal of Honor ratio. It would imply that BNAs received the Medal three to four times more

²² Calculation: $80,000 * 0.42 = 33,600$.

²³ Art Purnell, Secretary of the Southern Ontario Civil War Round Table, "To Author," April 14, 1992. Enclosed for my use was a copy of a letter written by Raymond Collins of the Medal of Honor Historical Society addressed to Art Purnell listing the twenty-nine. However, one of the twenty-nine may have been born in France, reports vary.

²⁴ The Medal of Honor of the United States Army, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office 1948) 469.

²⁵ Calculation: $29/1,200*100 = 2.417$.

²⁶ Calculation: $2,000,000 * 0.02417 = 48,340$; $2,300,000 * 0.02417 = 55,591$. These figures are based on a three year standard. Using the actual number of enlistments, officially listed as 2,778,034, we calculate that: $2,778,034 * 0.02147 = 67,145$ BNAs may have enlisted (including re-enlistments).

often than the army's average, a flattering notion for Canadians, but most unlikely.²⁷

The actual number of BNAs who served may never be known. The number is undoubtedly higher than Robertson's 15,000, and Winks' "several thousand." The true number, in all likelihood, lies somewhere between 34,000 and 55,000 -- a wide range, but the closest estimate that can be reached with the available data.

1.3 Who Were The BNAs?

BNAs were an extremely diverse group of men. They held a wide assortment of occupations, came from vastly different geographic and cultural backgrounds, were of wide ranging age, and, if this study proves indicative of the whole, were mainly American residents before their enlistment.

The fact that most were American residents should not be too surprising. After all, there were about 247,000 BNAs living in the Northern states in 1861. Table One shows the residential breakdown for the 1,045 BNAs found in the Town Clerks' Registers. The use of the phrase 'Canadian Residency' in Table One, rather than 'British North American Residency' is intentional. All those who claimed a residence outside New York State gave Canada as their home. It could not be determined from which section of the

²⁷ Robertson's BNA average would be $29/15,000*100=0.1933$. Compare this to the Union army average of 0.06 or 0.05 ($1,200/2,000,000*100=0.06$; or $1,200/2,300,000*100=0.05$).

Table 1
Residency and the BNA

	New York State Residency	Canadian Residency	Residency Not Stated	Sample Size
Number of Enlistments	738	103	204	1,045
As A Percentage of Total	70%	10%	20%	100%
Percentage Excluding Residency Not Stated	88%	12%	---	100%

province -- Canada East or Canada West -- BNAs came, as the records were rarely so precise.

At least 70% of BNAs studied were New York State residents at the time of their enlistment, with only 10% coming directly from British North America. Residential information was missing for the remaining 20%. Most of the 20% probably came from a town other than the one in which they enlisted. As the war wore on, outsiders filled more and more of the local enlistment needs, and town clerks were hard pressed to find personal data on these men. The enlistment bounty was the principal cause for this transience, a point discussed later in this paper. Whether the outsiders were from the British colonies, or from some other town, county, or state is, at this stage, impossible to tell. Regardless, the conclusion remains the same: most of the BNAs analyzed were living in New York State when the war began. This is even more apparent when we eliminate from the calculations those whose residency is unknown. As Table One shows, 88% of those BNAs with a known address lived in New York State, while only 12% crossed the border to sign-up. If these percentages hold true for all BNA enlistments, then about 6,600 of the maximum 55,000 estimated BNAs crossed the frontier to enlist.

This figure could rise dramatically, to about 30% of the enlistments (17,400 men), if the unknowns in Table One came from the provinces.

There were also 1,074 BNAs found in the Registers. Unfortunately, the Registers do not show residency. Instead they indicate whether an individual had voted in an American election, or was an alien. Table Two presents the voting status for these BNAs. Considering Tables One and Two together, a number of inferences can be made. Not only were most BNAs American residents (70% to 88%), but the majority (56% to 70%) had voted in an American election. This suggests that most BNAs were active in American community and political life. It would have been easy for such men to find themselves swept up in the sea of patriotic and duty bound citizenry enlisting

Table 2
BNA Voting Status

	Alien	Voter	Status Not Stated	Sample Size
Number of Enlistments	262	598	214	1,074
As a Percentage of Total	24%	56%	20%	100%
Percentage Excluding Status Not Stated	30%	70%	--	100%

in the armies. Having committed themselves to the United States, many BNAs likely felt compelled to help their adopted homeland during its civil war.

BNAs displayed wide ranging abilities. There were 114 different occupations listed for BNAs in the population studied, ranging from axe

polisher to umbrella maker to woollen mill worker. Also included were five doctors, one surgeon, two railroad brakemen and one steam engineer. There was also a butcher, a baker, and a boiler maker. In fact, if anything was required, a BNA could have been found to build it, repair it, drive it, or take it apart. Most BNAs, however, were farmers. Out of the 1,390 BNAs with occupational data available, 486, or 35%, were farmers.²⁸ Next in line came common labourers with 420 enlistments, comprising 30% of the total. Blacksmiths came in at a distant third, with 46 enlistments, then shoemakers (42), carpenters (41), soldiers (34), clerks (28), sailors (20), coopers (17), and rounding out the top ten were the sawyers accounting for 15 enlistments. This ranking of BNA occupations is similar to Bell Irvin Wiley's findings for the whole Union army. In Wiley's sample, farmers came first, then common labourers, followed in the distance by carpenters, shoemakers, clerks, blacksmiths, painters, mechanics, sailors, soldiers, machinists, masons, printers, teamsters and teachers. Wiley's sample differs though, in the percentage of farmers and labourers enrolled. Wiley, in a much larger sample, found that farmers made up almost half the enlistments in the Union army, while labourers, although ranked second, only accounted for about 10%.²⁹ BNA farmers then, were about 15% fewer than Wiley's Union army estimate, while BNA labourers were three times more plentiful. The differences though, probably reflect reality. It was not the prosperous who were leaving British North America, but the landless labourers, the poor, the unemployed, and those losing their traditional way of life. No doubt many lacked urban

²⁸ The sources do not state if distinctions were made between farm owners and farm labourers. Therefore, it is not known if farm labourers are listed as farmers or as labourers in the records.

²⁹ Wiley, Billy Yank 304.

skills, and were unable to afford a farm in New York State, even if they wanted one.³⁰ The statistics, therefore, *should* show fewer BNA farmers, and more BNA labourers than the army average.

Although most BNAs worked in occupations associated with manual labour, fifty reported a white-collar, entrepreneurial, or professional-type occupation. This represents 3.6% of the population studied. The Union army, on the other hand, averaged between 8.3% to 10.7% for these same job classifications, meaning BNAs were under represented.³¹ But again, being economic migrants, it cannot be expected that BNAs would occupy many

³⁰ According to the 1860 US Census about 30 percent of foreign male passengers landed in the USA were farmers, and about 42 percent were labourers. No distinction, however, was made by nativity. "United States Census of Population, 1860"; also, Alan Brooks, "British Canadians," Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, ed. Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980) 193 - 194; Harris and Warkentin, Canada Before Confederation (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1991) 69, 188; Podes, "Quebec to 'Little Canada': The Coming of the French Canadians to New England in the Nineteenth Century," The New England Quarterly 23 (1950): 366 - 367; Brooks "Out-Migration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860 - 1900: Some Preliminary Considerations," Acadiensis 5.1 (1976): 37; Albert Kennedy, "The Provincials" Acadiensis 4.2 (1975): 89, 91; James Allen, "Migration Fields of French Canadian Immigrants to Southern Maine," The Geographical Review 62.3 (July 1972): 372; Young and Dickinson, A Short History of Quebec (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988) 130 - 132; Gagan "The Indivisibility of Land: A Microanalysis of the System of Inheritance in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," Canadian Historical Review 54.1 (March, 1973): 128, 137, 140; Vedder and Gallaway, "Settlement Patterns of Canadian Emigrants to the United States, 1850 - 1960," The Canadian Journal of Economics 3.3 (1970): 486; Richard S. Sorrell, Research Notes, "Franco-Americans in New England," The Journal of Ethnic Studies 5.1 (1977): 90; Bittermann, Mackinnon and Wynn, "Of Inequality and Interdependence in the Nova Scotian Countryside, 1850 - 70," Canadian Historical Review 74.1 (March 1993): 11, 23, 24, 31 - 33, 36.

³¹ James McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, The Civil War Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 608.

positions in the commercial - professional class. As well, BNAs tended to be less educated than their American comrades, and this might have precluded their entry into the white-collar, commercial, and professional fields.³²

Occupations were not evenly shared between BNAs residing in New York State and those living in Canada. Table Three shows the occupational breakdown according to where BNAs lived. The small sample size for Canadian residents should be noted. Only 24 of the 103 BNAs from Canada reported an occupation. This number is too small to be fully reliable. Nevertheless, it is intriguing that BNA labourers from Canada accounted for 46% of the enlistments, while their farm-owning counterparts supplied only 25%. This is logical though, as men leaving the provinces were often unemployed and landless. The higher percentage of labourers is undoubtedly

Table 3
Occupation by Residency

Section One: Sample Size

Occupation	New York	Canada	Unknown	Total
Farmer	230	6	27	263
Labourer	173	11	60	244
Other	149	7	30	186
Total	552	24	117	693

Section Two: Percentages

Occupation	New York	Canada	Unknown	Total
Farmer	42%	25%	23%	38%
Labourer	31%	46%	51%	35%
Other	27%	29%	26%	27%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

³² See the discussion associated with Table Seven: BNA and Union Army Education Levels.

a reflection of who was migrating from the colonies. Also, as will be shown later, Canadian resident BNAs were more mercenary in motive than American resident BNAs and, since soldiers of fortune are more likely to be men without steady employment, the higher percentage of labourers makes sense.

The reverse is true for New York State BNAs. There were almost as many farming BNAs in my sample (42%) as there were in Wiley's Union army sample (close to 50%). BNA labourers living in New York though, were still about three times more numerous (31%) than Wiley's average (10%). But, as previously mentioned, this is likely a reflection of BNA migration.

Other occupations were about evenly divided; each group contained its share of blacksmiths, shoemakers and so forth. Interestingly, occupational statistics for those lacking residential information conformed more to Canadian, than to New York State residents -- evidence, perhaps, to support the notion that the 'unknowns' were transient men, or recent arrivals.

The ages of BNAs were also very diverse. Some were very young when they enlisted. Charles O'Neil, for example, was born in 1848 and enlisted in September 1861, making him thirteen or fourteen at the time. O'Neil is the youngest BNA found; he served in the 60th New York State infantry, and re-enlisted after his original term expired. William S. Round was also born in 1848, but he waited until August 1864 to enlist, making him about age sixteen. The records indicate that he received \$1,000 bounty from the town in which he enlisted plus \$500 more from the county. He also would have qualified for the federal bounty offered at the time, making him - if he survived -- quite an independent young man at war's end. Seymore Basset was also about 16 when he enlisted in January 1865, and served with the 94th New York infantry. All were clearly under age. However, the

enlistment of young boys was not uncommon. The Union army saw a number of twelve year old boys in the service. At the other end of the age scale was Orville Washaw, age seventy, the oldest man in the sample. Washaw, born in the 1790s, was listed as a married alien in the records. He joined the cavalry in August 1863 as a private, and served 16 months. There were also several BNAs in their sixties: Archy McDonald was sixty-five, Charles Pracey was sixty-four.

Table Four shows the age distribution for 1,775 BNAs. Eighty-three percent were between the ages of eighteen and forty-five at the time of their enlistment. Within this span, men aged eighteen to twenty-nine formed the largest group, accounting for 60% of all BNA enlistments. There were also a significant number of BNAs (13%) under the age of eighteen, and 4% were over the age of forty-five. Wiley, on the other hand, found that 98% of the men in the Union army were between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, with 1% to 1.5% under age eighteen, and 0.5% being over the age of forty-five.³³ It is unclear why there is such a disparity between BNAs in this study and the men in Wiley's sample.³⁴

³³ Wiley, Billy Yank 299.

³⁴ The disparity is not caused by assigning the wrong year to the ages listed in the Registers. It will be remembered that 1865 was chosen as the year to which the Registers' age statistics apply. Removing the Registers' data does not dramatically alter the findings. Ten percent of the BNAs found in the Town Clerks' Registers were also under age eighteen, and 3% were over age forty-five when they enlisted.

Table 4
BNA Age Distribution

Section One: Sample Size

Year of Enlistment	Under 18	18 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 45	over 45	18 to 45	Total
1861	56	278	62	15	12	355	423
1862	47	222	79	36	19	337	403
1863	49	154	46	22	13	222	284
1864	63	278	81	32	12	391	466
1865	17	140	27	8	7	175	199
Total	232	1,072	295	113	63	1,480	1,775

Section Two: Percentages

Year of Enlistment	Under 18	18 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 45	over 45	18 to 45	Total
1861	13%	66%	15%	4%	3%	84%	100%
1862	12%	55%	20%	9%	5%	84%	100%
1863	17%	54%	16%	8%	5%	78%	100%
1864	14%	60%	17%	7%	3%	84%	100%
1865	9%	70%	14%	4%	4%	89%	100%
Total	13%	60%	17%	6%	4%	83%	100%

It is impossible to determine from the available data if the average age of BNAs differed according to residency. Age statistics were scanty for BNAs from north of the border. Only 21 of the 103 had dates of birth listed in the sources. This is far too small a sample from which to draw conclusive results. Nevertheless, Table Five presents the findings, such as they are. For most of the conflict, BNAs with a New York State address tended to be in their later twenties, the years 1861 and 1865 proving the exceptions. BNAs with an unknown residency however, tended to be younger at the time of their enlistment. If the 'unknowns' were Canadian residents, then it was men in

Table 5
Average Age by Residency

Section One: Number of Enlistments Occurring
Per Residential Category Per Year

Year of Enlistment	Canadian Residency	New York Residency	Residency Not Stated
1861	4	203	16
1862	1	156	7
1863	3	90	39
1864	8	160	78
1865	5	73	17
Total	21	682	157

Section Two: Average Age At Enlistment Per Residential Category Per Year

Year of Enlistment	Canadian Residency	New York Residency	Residency Not Stated
1861	19	24	20
1862	25	28	23
1863	24	27	25
1864	29	27	23
1865	30	22	23

their early twenties who headed south to enlist most often. We cannot however, rule out the possibility that many may have been from other American towns. In either case, it seems certain that the unknowns were transients in their early twenties.

With most BNAs under age 30, it is not surprising to learn that most were also single. There were 1,477 BNAs listed in the sources with their marital status given; 791, or 54%, were single, while 686 (46%) were married. Whether this is similar to the proportion in the Union army is unknown, as no marital statistics were found for American enlistments.

Table Six shows the breakdown of marital statistics by residency.

Table 6
Marital Status of BNAs by Residency

Section One: Sample Size

Residence	Single	Married	Not Stated	Total
New York	318	237	183	738
Canada	16	8	79	103
Not Stated	22	17	165	204
Total	356	262	427	1,045

Section Two: Percentages

Residence	Single	Married	Not Stated	Total
New York	43%	32%	25%	100%
Canada	15.5%	7.8%	76.7%	100%
Not Stated	10.8%	8.3%	80.9%	100%
Total	34%	25%	41%	100%

Section Three: Percentages Recalculated Without the Unknowns

Residence	Single	Married	Total
New York	57%	43%	100%
Canada	67%	33%	100%
Total	58%	42%	100%

Unfortunately, the Town Clerks' Registers once again fail to report the statistics for most of those men residing in Canada before their enlistment. Only 24 of the 103 Canadian residents had marital information supplied, too small a sample to guarantee conclusive results. Nevertheless, Table Six summarizes the findings concerning those for whom we have the information.

Within each category, single men outnumbered married men. But, again, there were many unknowns contained in the sample. By removing the unknowns and recalculating the percentages we find that BNAs with a New York State residency were single 57% of the time. Meanwhile, 67% of

those from north of the border may have been single. Also noteworthy is the large number of BNAs (165) with both their residency and marital status unknown, evidence, perhaps, that town clerks had little idea who these men were, and further proof that the 'unknowns' were transient BNAs.

One can also measure the BNAs' education levels. On the whole, BNAs had received less schooling than the average Union army soldier. Table Seven shows the education levels achieved by 546 BNAs. Included for comparative purposes is the educational distribution for the Union army. From Table Seven, it is evident that most BNAs (77%) had some education at a common school. However, 88% of the Union army's soldiers reached that level. BNAs also lagged behind the army in the percentage of men with a high school, collegiate or professional education. In total, 3.8% of the BNAs had a high school, or better, education, compared to 4.9% for the whole army. Interestingly, the 3.8% approximates the 3.6% known to have held white collar and professional type work. Apparently, educated BNAs were not held back in their occupational pursuits. Not so impressive is the difference between BNAs with slight or no schooling compared to the army average. There were, proportionally, almost three times as many uneducated BNAs as uneducated Union soldiers. Since immigrant BNAs were likely poor and unskilled, and given the state of schooling then in existence, the higher percentage of uneducated men in the BNA ranks does not seem unreasonable.

Table 7
BNA and Union Army Education Levels

Section One: Sample Size

Sample group	None	Slight	Limited Common School	Good Common School	High School	Collegiate	Professional	Sample Size
Canada	92	10	237	152	13	3	1	508
British Prov. Exc. Canada	--	1	10	23	4	--	--	38
Total	92	11	247	175	17	3	1	546
Union Army	606	145	4,950	4,269	409	59	34	10,472

Section Two: Percentages

Sample group	None	Slight	Limited Common School	Good Common School	High School	Collegiate	Professional	Total
Canada	18%	2%	47%	30%	3%	0.6%	0.2%	100%
British Prov. Exc. Canada	--	3%	26%	61%	11%	--	--	100%
Total	17%	2%	45%	32%	3%	0.6%	0.2%	100%
Union Army	6%	2%	47%	41%	4%	0.6%	0.3%	100%

Adapted from Benjamin Gould's Table XVIII on page 570 in his work Investigations in the Military and Anthropological Statistics of American Soldiers.

There is another group of BNAs worthy of a closer look: those known as substitutes. When the Lincoln administration instituted conscription, drafted men could avoid service by either paying a \$300 commutation fee, or by hiring a substitute to take their place. Substitutes could only be taken from those men not liable for the draft: men too young or too old to serve, or foreigners who had not declared their intent to become citizens. Veteran troops considered substitutes more trouble than they were worth, believing

most were common thieves and cut-throats, not at all interested in the Union cause. Since we are told that many BNAs entered the Union army as substitutes, they merit further study. However, substitutes were rare in the population analyzed. Only 154 (7.3%) BNAs were substitute soldiers, although there were proportionally more BNAs enlisting as substitutes after March 1863 (14%) than was the case for the army (9.35%).³⁵

Information on substitutes in the sample is skimpy, making a definitive analysis difficult. Nevertheless, as Table Eight shows, the majority of substitutes had no known residence. Most were probably strangers to the town in which they enlisted. In fact, eighty-five percent of the substitutes lived in a place other than the one in which they enrolled. Moreover, Canadian residents accounted for 60% of those substitutes with a known residency. Therefore, while BNA substitutes came from all regions, most appear to have resided in Canada before their enlistment. This may have fuelled the opinion that substitutes had little regard for the Union's war aims, as most were unlikely to have possessed strong patriotic convictions.

Table 8
Residency of Substitute BNAs

	New York	Canada	Unknown	Total
Number Of Enlistments	21	32	84	137
As A Percentage Of Total	15.3%	23.4%	61.3%	100%
Percentage Excluding the Unknowns	40%	60%	---	100%

³⁵ James Geary, We Need Men: The Union Draft During the Civil War (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991) 84; My calculation: $146/1,046 * 100 = 13.957\%$ (14%).

Substitutes were also distributed differently between farmers and labourers than regular BNAs. Farmers accounted for 35% of ordinary BNAs, while labourers totalled about 30% of the enlistments. However, labourers accounted for 36% of the substitutes, and farmers amounted to only 15%.³⁶ BNA farmers, it seems, rarely became substitutes. As previously shown, BNA farmers did not often leave the colonies to enlist, and those who were American residents were probably the first BNAs to take out American citizenship, which would disqualify them from becoming a substitute. Studies have shown that many British Americans faithfully believed they would return to the provinces one day, and so did not bother changing allegiance.³⁷ Farmers though, had clearly set down roots, and it was unlikely that they would abandon their homesteads to return to the colonies. As such, they were probably faster than most non-land-owning BNAs to declare their citizenship intentions. Apart from their occupation, substitutes fit the profile of the 'average' BNA. Most were young, and unmarried.

From the available data, a composite sketch can be made of the 'typical' BNA. If he was an American resident before the war, and chances are he was, he probably came to the US to escape unemployment and/or poverty at home. Being a resident, there is a very good chance he had voted in an American election. This, in turn, implies he had been a resident for some time. Also, he would likely have been between 18 and 29 years of age, and single. His level of education was probably below that of his American compatriots; and there is a good chance he was a farmer or a common

³⁶ See the 'Abstracts of Muster Rolls for Substitutes Unassigned to any Unit During the Civil War, 1861 - 1865.'

³⁷ Brooks, "British Canadians" 196; Kennedy, "The Provincials" 93 - 98; Rowland Tappen Berthoff, British Immigrants in Industrial America, 1790 - 1950 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953) 139 - 140.

labourer in his pre-war life. If, perchance, he resided in Canada before the war, we would know less about him. He too, would have been less educated than his American companions, and was likely to have been single, and under age 29. He was more likely to have been a common labourer than a farmer, although evidence to support this is sketchy. If the statistics can be trusted, there is about a 30% chance he enlisted as a substitute, placing his enlistment in the second half of the war, when personal gain, not patriotism, ranked high as an enlistment motive.

1.4 BNA Enlistment Patterns

Studies on who BNAs were reveal only part of the BNA story. Analyzing *when* BNAs enlisted tells us even more, as enlistment motives changed over the four years of war. The volunteers of 1861, and to a lesser degree of 1862, are normally assigned noble motives: patriotism, duty, community pride, defence of the Union, and so forth. Some, undoubtedly, enlisted because they needed a job, but all were enthusiastic supporters of the war.³⁸ However, by the middle of 1862, war fever had ebbed, and enlistments had diminished. Nevertheless, the need for troops was as strong as ever, and the resulting manpower crunch forced the Lincoln administration to institute

³⁸ See, among others, the discussion on motive found in Wiley, Billy Yank 37 - 44; Wiley, "The Boys of '61," The Image of War 1861 - 1865. Vol. 1, The Shadows of the Storm, ed. William C. Davis (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1981) 122 - 165; Robertson, Soldiers Blue and Gray Chapter One; Reid Mitchell, Civil War Soldiers (Markham, Ontario: Viking Penguin Inc., 1988) Chapter One.

the Militia Act, an early conscription law, in July 1862. The shame associated with conscription was such that thousands of men volunteered to avoid public humiliation, and the disgrace of being labelled unpatriotic. At the same time, local governments and community organizations did all they could to encourage volunteering, as they too wished to avoid dishonour. In the end, so many men enlisted in 1862 that the Militia Act was not enforced. Historians agree that the troops raised in 1862 were about the last who put the nation's welfare ahead of their own.

By 1863, volunteering had slowed to a trickle. In March, the federal government enacted a new conscription law called the Enrollment Act, which was tougher than the Militia Act. Fewer exemptions were possible, and foreigners could now be drafted if they had declared their intention to become citizens, or had voted in an election. President Lincoln called for a draft to take place in July 1863, if new troop quotas went unfilled. Long casualty lists, poor army conditions, and high industrial wages dampened recruitment drives, and local officials, anxious to avoid a draft, began offering larger and larger enlistment bounties to encourage volunteering. High bounties in one town though, hurt recruitment drives in other towns. Communities began to compete for the limited available would-be soldiers. Thus, the period of the bounty soldier began, ushering in the time when men enlisted more for money than for duty.

There was a limit though, to what towns would pay. The conscription law, which allowed drafted men to avoid service by paying a \$300 fee, had the effect of capping bounty payments and substitute prices at about \$300. Not all communities offered this much, the amount varied depending upon how desperate an area was for new recruits. Towns with a major troop shortfall could be expected to offer higher bounties than those nearing their quota.

Shrewd volunteers shopped around before signing up, which helps to explain the large number of men in this study with an unknown residency.

Bounties remained fairly predictable until July 1864, at which time the Lincoln administration bowed to public pressure and removed the commutation clause. Bounties and substitution fees sky-rocketed overnight. With few men available for service, and fewer wishing to serve, draftees sought substitutes as never before. With the \$300 ceiling removed, substitutes demanded, and received, far greater sums: \$500, \$700, \$1,000 and more were not uncommon. Communities had to offer bounties equal to the going substitute prices to keep men enlisting in their locations. In New York State, bounties continued to rise until February 1865, when the state government began regulating the bounty. Afterwards, volunteers enlisting for three years could expect a maximum of \$600 as a state bounty, plus a maximum of \$600 from local governments, in addition to the \$300 federal bounty. Those enrolling for shorter terms received less. With the average wage for a common labourer approximately \$300 to \$400 per year, a three year enlistment was quite lucrative.³⁹

BNAs took advantage of the high bounties, and enlisted for huge sums. In Albany County in 1864, for example, some BNAs received \$900 from the county and would have received up to \$300 more from the federal government. Joseph Osford, a BNA enlisting in St. Lawrence County, received \$300 from the town of Fowler, \$700 from the county and \$300 more from the federal government. Recruits in Onieda County, at times received \$1,500 from the town and county combined. Add to this the federal bounty,

³⁹ For a history of the New York State bounty see Eugene Murdock, Patriotism Limited, 1862 - 1865. The Civil War Draft and the Bounty System, (Kent State University Press, 1967).

and a three year recruit might have realized about \$1,800 -- or four to six years pay for an average labourer.⁴⁰

Motivations for enlisting changed during the course of the war, and BNA behaviour reflected these changes. Table Nine shows the break down of BNA enlistments for the four years of fighting. Forty-five percent of the BNAs studied enlisted prior to 1863; that is, in the period when motives associated with patriotism were at their highest, and the prospects of financial gain were at a minimum. The corollary, of course, is that 55% enlisted during the years with the highest bounty payments, with 39% enlisting in the last 16 months of the war. It was probably no coincidence that 1864 -- a bumper year for bounties -- was also a bumper year for enlistments. Figures for the average daily enlistment rate strengthen these findings. The years 1861 and 1865 saw

Table 9
BNA Enlistments by Year

Year of Enlistment	Number of Enlistments	As a Percentage of BNAs Studied	Enlistments Accrued by Years' End	Average Daily Enlistment Rate
1861	431	22%	22%	1.66*
1862	442	23%	45%	1.21+
1863	315	16%	61%	0.86+
1864	555	29%	90%	1.52
1865	202	10%	100%	1.94•
Total	1,945	100%	---	1.33~

*Based on 260 enlistment days (ie from April 15, 1861). + Based on a 365 day year.⁴¹ ~ Based on a 366 day year. •Based on 104 Enlistment days (ie to April 14, 1865). - Based on 1,460 days.

⁴⁰ See the Town Clerks' Records, New York State Archives for amounts paid out to volunteers.

⁴¹ In 1862 Union recruitment offices closed from April 3 to June 6. However, enlistments still trickled in, including 44 BNAs in this study.

the highest daily enlistment rates. In 1861, when duty and community pride were incentive enough, large numbers of BNAs volunteered. By 1863, through depletion and war weariness, the daily rates tumbled to an all time low. In 1864, once substantial enlistment bounties were offered, the rates shot upwards, peaking in 1865. In fact, the daily rate for 1865 surpassed the rate for 1861.

Enlistment bounties had enormous influence on BNA recruitment. Table Ten makes this clear by demonstrating the effect repeal of the commutation clause had on BNA enlistments. Table Ten is identical to Table Nine, with the exception that 1864 is split. From January to July 4, 1864, the commutation clause was in effect, and bounties were stable at about \$300. Afterwards, repeal came into effect and bounties increased. The results were immediate. BNA enlistments soared as enlistment bounties increased. The second half of the year saw the greatest BNA enlistment activity of the war, with 370 enlistments occurring in six months; a rate of 2.06 BNA volunteers per day. Only the increase in bounties could have had such an impact, as it was the only new enlistment incentive.⁴²

⁴² Some men, no doubt, enlisted in the last few months of the war so as to take part in the final defeat of the South. And, after September 1864, thanks to recent victories in the field, the public mood in the North was higher than it had been for a long time, which probably had some influence on enlistments as well. However, the reasons why men avoided service were still numerous: risk to life, low pay, arrears in pay, hardship, high industrial wages, etc. The bounties offered are the best explanation for the surge in BNA volunteering. Of the 370 enlistments occurring in the last six months of 1864, 88% came in during July, August and September, immediately after the commutation clause was repealed, and at a daily enlistment rate of 3.72.

Table 10
The Effect Repeal of the Commutation Clause Had on BNA Enlistments

Period of Enlistment	Number of Enlistments	As a Percentage of BNAs Studied	Enlistments Accrued by Periods' End	Average daily Enlistment Rate
1861	431	22%	22%	1.66*
1862	442	23%	45%	1.21+
1863	315	16%	61%	0.86+
Jan. 1, 1864 to July 4, 1864	185	10%	71%	1.00^
July 5, 1864 to December 31, 1864	370	19%	90%	2.06-
1865	202	10%	100%	1.94•
Total	1,945	100%	---	1.33#

*Based on 260 days. +Based on 365 days. ^Based on 186 days. -Based on 180 days. •Based on 104 days. # Based on 1,460 days.

However, BNAs did not find the bounty appealing enough to risk their lives for extended periods. As Table Eleven illustrates, during 1864 and 1865 bounties may have been high, but fewer BNAs were enlisting for more than one year of service. By 1865 only 31% of BNAs studied had volunteered for more than one year, compared to a 96% average for the first three years of war. During the last 16 months of the conflict BNAs were signing-up for quick cash and short terms. In New York, in February 1865, even a one year term offered new recruits \$500 in state and local bounties. During the first three years of the war, when bounties were not high enough to provide strong motivation, BNAs enlisted for longer terms -- usually three years. Whether non-BNAs displayed similar enlistment patterns has not been determined. A future study, one that compares all enlistments in the seven counties to BNA enlistments, should clarify this point.

Table 11
Changing BNA Enlistment Terms

Year of Enlistment	Number Enlisting For More Than One Year	Number Enlisting For One Year or Less	Percentage Enlisting For More Than One Year	Percentage Enlisting For One Year or Less
1861	341	20	94%	6%
1862	366	13	97%	3%
1863	273	12	96%	4%
1864	315	190	62%	38%
1865	58	128	31%	69%
Total	1,353	363	79%	21%

BNAs were not the only people lured into the army by the enlistment bounty. Nearly half the Union army's enlistments occurred after March 1863, during the bounty phase of the war. The prospects of financial gain no doubt attracted many.⁴³ Table Twelve compares BNA enlistments to the Union army, both before and after March 1863. If BNAs found in the Seven Counties

Table 12
BNA and Union Army Enlistments Compared

	Number of BNA Enlistments	Percentage of BNA Enlistments	Percentage of Union Army Enlistments ⁴⁴
Enlistments to March 31, 1863	899	46%	52%
Enlistments After March 31, 1863	1,046	54%	48%
Total	1,945	100%	100%

⁴³ See, among others, Murdock, Patriotism Limited; and Fred Shannon, "The Mercenary Factor in the Creation of the Union Army," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 12 (June 1925 to March 1926): 523 - 549 for a full discussion of bounty soldiers and bounty motives.

⁴⁴ Geary, We Need Men 81 - 82.

are representative of the whole, then it seems they were almost as patriotic as other Union soldiers. Forty-six percent of those BNAs analyzed enlisted before March 1863, compared to 52% for the entire army. This shows that BNAs were not nearly as mercenary as some accounts lead us to believe.

When separating BNA soldiers by their residency, we find that those with a New York State address enlisted heavily in the early years of the war, with outsiders picking up the slack in the later stages. In Table Thirteen, we see a steady erosion of the New York State BNAs' share of each year's enlistments. Their share dropped from a high of 90% in 1861, to a low of 53% in 1864. There was, though, a sudden surge of volunteering in 1865. New York BNAs appeared anxious to cash in on the liberal bounties, and perhaps take part in the final defeat of the South.

But even with their late interest in bounties, it cannot be said that personal gain was the prime enlistment motivation for BNAs living in New York. Fifty-two percent of those BNAs residing in New York who would

Table 13
Enlistments by BNAs with New York State Residency

Year of Enlistment	Number of Enlistments	Percentage of the Years' Total BNA Enlistment	Enlistments Accrued By Years' End	Average Daily Enlistment Rate
1861	215	90%	29%	0.83*
1862	170	82%	52%	0.47+
1863	99	61%	65%	0.27+
1864	174	53%	89%	0.48 [^]
1865	80	73%	100%	0.77 [•]
Total	738	70%	---	0.51 ⁻

*Based on 260 days (ie. from April 15, 1861). + Based on 365 days.

[^] Based on 366 days. [•] Based on 104 days (ie. to April 15, 1865). ⁻ Based on 1,460 days.

enlist, had done so before 1863, when patriotism, community pride, and duty consciousness played key roles in recruitment. This compares favourably to the Union army which, as shown earlier, also saw 52% of its enlistments occur before March 1863. Indeed, 65% of New York BNAs enlisted before 1864, the year Lincoln repealed the commutation clause, showing that money did not attract the majority. New York BNAs enlisted most heavily in 1861 (at least in the seven counties), at a daily rate of 0.83, or about two enlistments every three days.

The enlistment behaviour of those BNAs with a Canadian address differed from New York State BNAs, as Table Fourteen reveals. Clearly, the number of BNAs who claimed a Canadian residency was small, with only 103 listed as such in the records. This translates to 10% of the population studied. Drawing conclusions from a sample size of only 103 is perhaps risky, so caution must be employed when accepting, and using the findings.

Canadian residents appear to have enlisted primarily in the second half of the war, with 69% of their enlistments occurring after 1862, during the

Table 14
Enlistments by BNAs with Canadian Residency

Year of Enlistment	Number of Enlistments	Percentage of the Years' Total BNA Enlistment	Enlistments Accrued By Years' End	Average Daily Enlistment Rate
1861	5	2%	5%	0.02*
1862	27	13%	31%	0.07+
1863	16	10%	47%	0.04+
1864	45	14%	90%	0.12`
1865	10	9%	100%	0.10•
Total	103	10%	---	0.07~

*Based on 260 days (ie. from April 15, 1861). + Based on 365 days.

` Based on 366 days. • Based on 104 days (ie. to April 15, 1865). ~Based on 1,460 days.

period when enlistment bonuses began to peak. Thirty-one percent though, did enlist before that date, and must have done so for reasons not entirely mercenary (although economic conditions in the British provinces were such that men were continually leaving to find work in the United States). Maximizing wealth appears to have been the driving force for most.⁴⁵ The average daily enlistment rate tripled in 1864 over what it had been in 1863. The repeal of the commutation clause is the leading cause for this increase. Between January and July 1864, the daily rate was 0.07, subsequent to repeal it jumped to 0.18. For this study, in numbers of men, it means that before July, one BNA from Canada was volunteering every two weeks; after July, one BNA from Canada enlisted every five days.

BNAs with no known residency behaved much like Canadian resident

Table 15
Enlistments by BNAs with Unstated Residency

Year of Enlistment	Number of Enlistments	Percentage of the Years' Total BNA Enlistment	Enlistments Accrued By Years' End	Average Daily Enlistment Rate
1861	19	8%	9%	0.07*
1862	10	5%	14%	0.03+
1863	48	29%	38%	0.13+
1864	108	33%	91%	0.30
1865	19	18%	100%	0.18•
Total	204	20%	---	0.14~

*Based on 260 days (ie. from April 15, 1861). + Based on 365 days.

˘ Based on 366 days. • Based on 104 days (ie. to April 15, 1865). ~Based on 1,460 days.

⁴⁵ R. K. Vedder and L. E. Gallaway, "Settlement Patterns of Canadian Emigrants to the United States, 1850 - 1960," The Canadian Journal of Economics 3.3 (August 1970): 486 conclude that Canadian immigrants were economic maximizing individuals.

BNAs, except that the 'unknowns' were more extreme in their behaviour. They appear almost wholly bounty driven. Eighty-six percent enlisted after 1862. As Table Fifteen shows, 62% enrolled in the last 16 months of the war, with the 1864 daily enlistment rate doubling the 1863 figure. Interestingly, beginning in 1863 with the rise in bounties, the number of unknowns enlisting increased dramatically. Apparently, large numbers of men began to shop around for the highest enlistment bounty or substitution price.

Residency then, had a powerful influence over BNA enlistment behaviour. BNAs living in New York State enrolled in patterns much like their American neighbours: enthusiastically in the first year or two as duty called, but less so as the war dragged on. Their enlistments increased when the bounties increased, but did not reach the same level as the early years. Outsiders, men who either came from Canada or some other region within the United States, picked up the slack. These men were more interested in money than in war aims.

BNAs who had voted in an American election were also quick to join.

Table 16
Enlistments by BNAs Who Had Voted in an American Election

Year of Enlistment	Number of Enlistments	Percentage of the Years' Total BNA Enlistment	Enlistments Accrued By Years' End	Average Daily Enlistment Rate
1861	165	67%	28%	0.63*
1862	187	67%	59%	0.51+
1863	81	47%	72%	0.22+
1864	120	44%	92%	0.33 ^ˆ
1865	45	42%	100%	0.43•
Total	598	56%	----	0.41~

*Based on 260 days (ie. from April 15, 1861). + Based on 365 days.

ˆ Based on 366 days. • Based on 104 days (ie. to April 15, 1865). ~Based on 1,460 days.

Having taken part in American political life, these BNAs probably felt some obligation to their adopted government. As Table Sixteen shows, 59% of BNAs who had voted and enlisted, did so before 1863. Moreover, 72% of the voters who enlisted had done so before 1864, and repeal of the commutation clause. Clearly, those BNAs who were American residents and voters, were early supporters of the war.

Aliens, on the other hand, showed opposite tendencies. Only 43% of the aliens who would enlist had done so before 1863. This enlistment rate is far below that of the voters, but then, aliens were under no legal obligation to serve. Taken in this light, 43% can be construed as a good showing. Many aliens, having lived in the United States for several years, probably wanted to help their adopted homeland. On the other hand, since BNAs were slow to switch allegiance, there may have been more alien BNAs living in New York than voting BNAs. If this were the case, then the alien share of enlistments was under-represented. Table Seventeen also shows that the alien share of

Table 17
Enlistments by Alien BNAs

Year of Enlistment	Number of Enlistments	Percentage of the Years' Total BNA Enlistment	Enlistments Accrued By Years' End	Average Daily Enlistment Rate
1861	54	22%	21%	0.21*
1862	58	21%	43%	0.16+
1863	46	27%	60%	0.13+
1864	79	29%	91%	0.22 [^]
1865	25	23%	100%	0.24 [•]
Total	262	24%	---	0.18 ⁻

*Based on 260 days (ie. from April 15, 1861). + Based on 365 days.

[^]Based on 366 days. [•]Based on 104 days (ie. to April 15, 1865). ⁻Based on 1,400 days.

each years' enlistments remained relatively constant, around 24%, suggesting that the bounty was not overly influential, although the daily enlistment rate did slightly increase in 1864 and 1865.

Judging the behaviour of BNAs without voting status is a difficult task. Table Eighteen presents the findings. It is not clear where the unknowns resided, as the records indicating voting status (the Registers) do not indicate residency. However, the average age at enlistment for these BNAs was nineteen, too young to have voted, and this probably accounts for the lack of voting status. They obviously enlisted just after turning military age, but whether this means they did so for patriotic sentiments, or for bounties is difficult to gauge. Interestingly, their share of each years' enlistments rose significantly once large bounties became standard. Seventy-two percent of

Table 18
Enlistments by BNAs with an Unstated Voting Status

Year of Enlistment	Number of Enlistments	Percentage of the Years' Total BNA Enlistment	Enlistments Accrued By Years' End	Average Daily Enlistment Rate
1861	27	11%	13%	0.10*
1862	33	12%	28%	0.09+
1863	44	26%	49%	0.12+
1864	72	27%	82%	0.20`
1865	38	35%	100%	0.37•
Total	214	20%	---	0.15~

*Based on 260 days (ie. from April 15, 1861). + Based on 365 days.

` Based on 366 days. • Based on 104 days (ie. to April 15, 1865). ~Based on 1,460 days.

this group's enlistments occurred during the bounty phase of the war. Nearly 20% enlisted in the last four months of the conflict, when bounties were high

and risk low. The daily enlistment rate almost doubled in 1865 over what it was in 1864 (from 0.20 to 0.37). It was also primarily this group of BNAs who, as the war progressed, opted for shorter enlistment terms. In 1865, 87% of those with an unknown voting status signed-up for one year or less, compared to 58% for voters, and 61% for aliens. This was a complete reversal of 1861, which saw 86% of the unknowns volunteering for more than one year.⁴⁶

One motive not yet considered is the desire of BNAs to help defeat slavery. As previously mentioned, Lois Darroch believes that this was the overriding influence affecting BNA enlistments. The statistics though, do not support her position. Bell Irvin Wiley found that less than one in ten Union soldiers ever gave serious thought to the slave.⁴⁷ It seems unlikely that these one in ten Union soldiers were BNAs, but it is worth taking a closer look.

Those BNAs studied did not appear concerned with the slavery issue. Only 6% enlisted in the first three months of the war -- the time when many people believed the defeat of slavery was one of Lincoln's war aims. After Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation, in September 1862, BNA enlistments dropped appreciably, from 189 enlistments in August, to eighty-five enlistments in September, to thirty-eight in October, to twelve in November and December. When the Emancipation Proclamation came into effect on January 1, 1863, BNA enlistments slid further, to eleven in both January and February and to two in March. This clearly indicates that the defeat of slavery was not particularly important to BNAs.

⁴⁶ The study also showed that 72% of New York resident BNAs, and 60% of Canadian resident BNAs enlisted for one year or less in 1865.

⁴⁷ Wiley, Billy Yank 40.

Not all BNAs volunteered, some were drafted. The sources list six BNAs (0.28% of the population analyzed) as draftees -- a very low number. From March 1863 onward, less than 1% of BNAs enrolled were conscripts. During the same period conscription accounted for 3.67% of the Union army's enlistments.⁴⁸ BNAs either volunteered more often than the average, or were more nimble in avoiding the draft, or a combination of the two. As BNAs were slow in taking out citizenship, the low number of men drafted may also reflect the fact that there were fewer BNAs legally available for the call.

In the final analysis, it cannot be stated that BNAs were a homogeneous group of men. Those residing in the United States displayed characteristics distinct from BNAs who crossed the frontier to enlist. It is also probably fair to say that most BNA volunteers were American residents before the war. This was overwhelmingly the case in New York State, where those BNAs crossing the border accounted for only a fraction of the total. American residents, especially those who had voted, volunteered early, when support for the war was high, and when patriotic motives were the driving force behind most men's enlistment decisions. To these men the war, at least initially, was a national crusade to restore the Union. Canadian residents, on the other hand, showed little patriotism -- it was not their war. There was little reason for men living in the colonies to sign-up, at least not until bounties made it worthwhile. Their enlistments were almost entirely economically driven. With poverty, unemployment and land scarcity a fact of life for many in British North America, hefty enlistment bounties offered

⁴⁸ Geary, We Need Men 84.

an alternative future. Those who accepted were not enthusiastic supporters of the war; to them, soldiering was an opportunity, not a crusade.

CHAPTER 2

THE BNA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

2.1 The Sources

Chapter two focuses upon BNA letters, diaries and other personal papers. Documents written by and about individual BNAs provide invaluable, first-hand testimonies of those people's war-time involvement; they contain information that no statistical inquiry can discover; and finally, they lend a personal flavour to our understanding of those soldiers' experiences. We learn the thoughts of BNAs as they witnessed, and participated in the Civil War. At the same time, we discover the depth of their commitment to the United States, and to winning the war. The contribution made by BNAs was real and can be documented, and their letters reveal that they were full and active participants. The letters were used to answer two basic questions: first, why did the individual enlist? Second, what were his experiences? Both questions led to additional ones. For instance, in what year did the individual volunteer? Where did he live prior to enlisting? Did he write about the British provinces? Did he know of other BNAs in the army, and was there an effort to seek them out? Was there a uniquely British North American Civil War experience? Were BNAs discriminated against, or had they been fully accepted into American society? Answers to these, and other similar questions, help establish a BNA

perspective on the rebellion, and by doing so, round out our assessment of who the BNAs were and why they volunteered.

The problem with BNA letters though, is their scarcity. Writings by French Canadians, for example, are under-represented in this study. I could locate only one diary by a French Canadian, and it was written in English by a man who had lived most of his life in New York State. The situation for Maritimers is not so bleak, as I managed to obtain several letters by New Brunswick or Nova Scotia born men. By far, individuals from Canada West, or English speaking Canada East wrote most of the letters in my collection, but even these are few in number.

Some BNA letters have been published. Most however, remain hidden in archives, museums and attics. In addition, contemporary British North American newspapers proved a valuable source. Editors often printed letters by, and news about local boys from 'the seat of war.' Newspaper letters had clearly been edited for print, but the substance and feelings of the writer remained very much present. The shortcoming of newspaper letters is their lack of personal information on the writer. There is often no way of telling, for instance, if the writer had been born in the colonies. Instead of dismissing all letters printed by the provincial press as the product of non-BNAs, I decided that newspaper letters were written by men born in the provinces, unless some evidence to the contrary was available.

In total, I located thirty-four sets of letters, diaries and letter fragments. Ideally, they should be separated and compared according to where the writers lived before their enlistment, and by the years in which they enroled. As we saw in Chapter One, year and residency are crucial to our understanding of BNA war-time involvement. Unfortunately, such a study could not be undertaken. I only learned the residency and the year of enlistment for

seventeen sets, and some of those do not discuss motive. Moreover, thirteen of the seventeen were written by men enlisting in 1861 or 1862, when patriotism was at a premium. Two of the remaining four were located in the governor general's records which, as mentioned in Chapter One, is not a good source for obtaining information on average BNAs. Therefore, due to the relative lack of letters, and because most were written in the early war years, I decided that an analysis based on residency and enlistment dates was not practical. If several hundred letters had been located, and had they been written in all years of the war, such an approach would have been feasible.

Notwithstanding their shortcomings, letters remain a valuable source of information for interpreting the life of BNA soldiers. What we discover is that BNAs, in many ways, were very much like their American counterparts, so thoroughly discussed in Bell Irvin Wiley's The Life of Billy Yank, Reid Mitchell's Civil War Soldiers, and James Robertson's Soldiers Blue and Gray. BNAs shared the Americans' reasons for enlisting, and their concerns, dislikes and complaints. However, BNAs were not Americans; nor did they simply fade into the background, as Ella Lonn suggested, forever lost to the historian, and unrecognizable from other US citizens. Their writings confirm the BNAs' commitment to the war aims, and prove that they were not unprincipled rogues, or men who had been forced into the army by heavily armed recruiting agents, as depicted in many historical accounts.

2.2 BNA Enlistment Motives

At first, BNAs often went to war to defend some principle. William Mackenzie, son of William Lyon Mackenzie of Upper Canada Rebellion fame, was a BNA who left Toronto sometime between April and June 1861 for the seat of war. Although William's letters do not state why he enlisted, his father's writings imply that the cause of freedom was the reason. This might be his father's wishful thinking, but the timing of William's enlistment would not be out of line with the early belief that the war was about ending slavery in the South. William Lyon Mackenzie wrote:

William went to Cincinnati with Dr. King's nephew, and others of Toronto: they enlisted or volunteered -- first for 3 months -- more recently for 3 years. William is young, and I am glad he's on the side of freedom and not for injustice.¹

Patrick O'Kane, of New Brunswick, on the other hand, showed no love for the slave. He commented to this effect three days before the Emancipation Proclamation was to go into effect. "I wish to God this War was conducted for the 'Union as it was and the Constitution as it is'. I would be willing to loose my life for those principles, but the continual Niger, Niger..." [the rest was missing].²

¹ William Lyon Mackenzie, "To James," June 22, 1861, Mackenzie Collection, MG24, B18, Vol. 9, # 1666, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

² Patrick O'Kane, "To Mary," December 28, 1862, St. Michael's Museum Association, Chatham, New Brunswick.

Henry Jackson, from Canada West, would have disagreed with O'Kane. Jackson enlisted in 1862, and had, for a short time, been living in Michigan. Jackson saw slavery as an evil.

I have no doubt in my mind. God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform is truly shown forth in the way the rebels have acted by their trying to uphold slavery it will be the more quickly brought down. I do not like slavery nor oppression in whatsoever form.³

Six months later he wrote that people

will not be apt to forget to plead for the old flag under which his fore fathers fought for civil liberty, although it has cost thousands of lives and millions of of [sic] money to keep it floating in the breeze, its immense cost will only show its value to the world at large, it has long been an emblem of freedom to the whites at present and in the future it will comand the same respect from the blacks.⁴

However, Jackson's motives reached beyond the defeat of slavery in the United States. He saw the war as having broader, international ramifications, and recognized it as a rebellion against a duly elected government. To Jackson, lawlessness had to be extirpated.

when we leave here we go where duty calls us where ever it may be, to enforce the laws of the country in the face of face of [sic] armed rebels, & thretcherous traitors in our midst. I should not

³ Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," January 8, 1863, Wellington County Museum and Archives, Ontario.

⁴ Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," June 7, 1863.

have half so much hope of success if I was uncertain that we are right, or in a just cause.⁵

And,

I wish to impress upon your mind that the war is a war between the government and rebels not the north against the south as is often expressed. It is a trial between freedom and slavery not only here but it has its effect over the whole world.⁶

He also believed that unpopular laws had to be enforced. The Emancipation Proclamation was one such law.

There are a great many union men in Kentucky that think the emancipation proclamation will not be carried out, which seems to me more like dereliction [dereliction?] than anything else. It is well enough that they should think so at present but they must know that it is an army order & as such must be enforced although there is a vast number of soldiers that are against it.⁷

Jackson died defending the nation's laws on November 16, 1863 at the Battle of Campbell's Station, Tennessee. J. S. Booth, a friend of Jackson, wrote to Jackson's uncle informing him of the news: "I saw Henry Jackson, one of my best friends and a noble soldier, laying on the field dead. He was shot in the forehead and must have died almost instantly."⁸

5 Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," June 7, 1863.

6 Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," June 6, 1863.

7 Henry Jackson, "To Aunt and Uncle," April 18, 1863.

8 J. S. Booth, "To A. McCorkindale, Esq'r," October 10, 1864, Wellington County Museum and Archives, Ontario.

Augustus Sorg was another BNA who enlisted early in the war, in May 1861. From Dunnville, Canada West, Sorg crossed the frontier and enlisted without his parents' knowledge. His letters do not state why he enlisted but they do indicate strong support for the Union government. He never mentioned slavery, so it was unlikely a strong motivation. Money may have played some part, but he only speaks of money once in his letters, and not until September 1864. Perhaps adventure drew him, or the thrill of seeing battle, for on June 13, 1862 he wrote: "We have not been lucky enough yet to have a battle but we should have one if it had not been for one of our generals who I believe is a traitor to his country." On one occasion, in September 1864, he referred to the US government as "my government" perhaps implying that the Union's cause was his. The closest he came to supplying a reason for his enlistment occurred in a letter he wrote in May 1864. He ends his letter with a poem about his duty to Jesus and signed it

"Gus

Union Forever"

Whatever Gus was fighting for, his fate remains unknown. His letters stopped arriving in the fall of 1864, and he was never heard from again.⁹

Arthur Rankin, a member of the provincial parliament for Canada West, believed the American form of government was worth fighting to preserve. In 1861 he began recruiting in Canada for a regiment of lancers, and became the regiment's colonel, which also might explain his exuberance for the Union. In any event, the British government charged him with violating the Foreign Enlistment Act, which prohibited British subjects from both

⁹ Augustus Sorg, "To Jacob," June 13, 1862; May 1864, September 31, 1864, Sorge family papers.

recruiting for a foreign power, and volunteering in a foreign service. He asked

why [should it] be a crime for Canadians to enter the American service? Is not the cause of the United States the cause of civilization and free government? Has any struggle so largely affecting the welfare of mankind in general taken place in any other country on the face of the earth within the present or any former age?¹⁰

Norman Wade, from Granville Ferry, Nova Scotia, enlisted for several reasons. Wade left Nova Scotia in 1859, and worked as a sailor on board the brig Cyrene. Never settling in the USA, Wade always remained a Nova Scotian at heart. He enlisted in the Union navy in September 1861, and was to serve one year. Norman offered three reasons to his parents for his decision: something to do, the pay, and the justice of the cause. "Perhaps you will be surprised at the step I have taken now," he wrote.

You may consider me now as belonging to Uncle Sam for one year... When I came back to Boston from Detroit, times were so dull I had a good mind to come home but falling in with an old friend who was going in the Young Rover and who got the billet for me which is not so bad as my pay is twenty-five dollars a month besides the prize money...[and]...I am confident our cause is a just one.¹¹

¹⁰ Ella Lonn, Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy, (1951; New York: Greenwood Press, 1969) 68.

¹¹ Norman Wade, "To Parents," September 20, 1861, "Letters of Norman Wade," The Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly, ed. Leone Cousins, 4.2 (1974): 126 - 127.

Many in Nova Scotia were pro-Confederate, and Wade found he had to defend his support for the Union against his brother's charges that he was a Lincoln hireling. His defence is, in all likelihood, applicable to the vast majority of BNAs accused of enlisting in the Northern armies as mercenaries, especially when those BNAs resided in the Northern States before the war. Writing to his brother on March 5, 1862 he said

I was not surprised to hear that your sympathies were wholly with the south, and do not see how it can be possible, considering the relation we bear the northern people. You say that if three millions of people want their freedom they ought to have it, but is it freedom they are fighting for, or are they dupes of designing politicians? All know that there can be no freer form of Government than the United States, and it is no wonder that Europe, a tyrant, should look upon her with an evil eye. You choose to look upon me as a hireling, but I beg leave to inform you that not only my sword (for you recollect that I wear one) but my whole heart is in the cause I have adopted. For where is a Country where foreigners receive all the priviledges of native born citizens? and persons receiving those priviledges cannot be called hirelings for trying to support her in her times of trouble.¹²

But like so many other BNAs, Norman Wade did not survive the war. He was killed on September 14, 1862, at the very end of his term of service.

There were others who left British North America for 'the seat of war' because they saw a need for their services, and recognized an opportunity to gain practical experience. Francis Moses Wafer, a second year medical student at Queen's University in Kingston, Canada West, saw in the war a great

¹² Norman Wade, "To Brother," March 5, 1862, "Letters of Norman Wade," 134 - 135.

chance to hone his surgical skills. He left his studies in 1863, and went to New York. He wrote and passed the army medical examination, and then became an assistant surgeon in the 108th New York State Infantry. After the war he returned to his medical studies and graduated from Queen's in 1867. "Many Canadians", according to Wafer, "took the opportunity 'to profit by the new and extensive field thrown open for study of practical surgery.'" But Wafer was not only in the conflict for his benefit, he also "believed in the Northern Cause."¹³

Reverend Y. B. Tate, of Montreal, also may have seen a need for his services. He applied to the US Consul for an appointment as Chaplain in the American army. When passing on the recommendation to the US Secretary of State, the consul wrote that Reverend Tate "is a gentleman of culture and education, highly esteemed by the friends of our country in this city, and I would ask...[he] be favorably considered."¹⁴

Adventure undoubtedly attracted some BNAs to the American colours. But then, who could resist the romantic image of the cavalryman, as expressed in the Globe when describing Rankin's Lancers: "The [cavalryman], with his revolver in his left hand, his sabre in his right, guiding his lance mainly with his leg, and horse under good training, can deal out death upon

¹³ H. P. Gundy, ed. "A Queen's Medical Student in the Army of the Potomac, 1863 - 1864," Douglas Library Notes 6.3 (Kingston, Ontario: Queen's University Press): 3; and "A Kingston Surgeon in the American Civil War", Historic Kingston, 7 (Kingston: Kingston Historical Society, 1957 - 1958): 45.

¹⁴ US Consul in Montreal, "To Secretary of State Seward," February 5, 1865, Despatches from the US Consul in Montreal, November 1864 to May 1865, Vol. 6, number 606, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

the front and each flank at the same time.”¹⁵ This was the image in 1861, before reality set in.

John Campbell was living in the United States when he enlisted early in the war. In a letter to his father he attempted to explain his decision.

But ever Since I could Read about war I always thought I would like to Be a member of the Same and I got a chance in my Early days, and I am not Sory for taking it, for I no was into any thing in my life that agrees with me than my present position it is Exiting times not much to do and get Enough to Eat and Drink and plenty of the Best of Clothing and good wages for Such Business as this the goverment Pays thirteen dollars per month and one Hundred dollars bounty when the war is Ended and they say that they will give them 160 acres of goverment land But all these things Hint maid me Enlist my mind was on it day and night and I Could not Be satisfied untill I tryed it But I am not Sory I did Vollinteer.

Further in his letter he returned to why he enlisted:

[Well] Father I will make Some Excuses In my Enlisting in the First place when this war Broak out it caused Some Hard Times and money was scarce and I Had Considerable coming to me and the times Being So Hard I could not get it so I thought I should not go Home until the times should get Beter and get my dues and then I should go Home and as many things Runs in young mens Heads I up and Enlisted and in fact I Hint Sory for it and don't Expect I Shall.¹⁶

¹⁵ The Globe, October 5, 1861.

¹⁶ John Campbell, "To Father," February 17, 1862, MG55/24 #393, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

Some who enlisted for adventure regretted their decision. John Stuart of Chatham, Canada West, liked the thrill of soldiering, and in late 1861 or early 1862 wrote: "I am in good health at present and like soldiering first-rate. There are good times shooting the Secesch on picket guard. I myself have had some close calls occasionally, I have been in two battles and think there is some good fun in fighting." His enthusiasm waned by the spring of 1862. In May he wrote that he was "getting tired of soldiering. I haven't drawn any pay for four months."¹⁷

Some BNAs did not have any clear idea why they had enlisted. Charles Riggins of Fonthill, Canada West, crossed the border and enlisted in the spring of 1862. At first it seems he did so for the work. "Arrived Buffalo 2 o'clock, got room for 12? a week, went around to see sights, looked for work, found nothing to do so enlisted in the 14th USA."¹⁸ Later it appears he enlisted out of spite. Riggins had had a fight with his brother, and stormed out of the house and enlisted.

You must not think I was angry with you when I left. I know I went out very hasty but as soon as I got out I felt sorry for what I had done but I hope you will not feel bad about it as I was as much to blame as you. I know you did not want me to go and you said it to discourage me but I hope that it may be all for the best.¹⁹

What the fight was about, unfortunately, is unknown, perhaps he was talking about enlisting. In any event, it is unlikely that Riggins enlisted for any noble

17 John Stuart, "To Sylvester Hadley," 1862; "To Brother," May 4, 1862, Chatham Weekly Planet, March 6, and May 22, 1862.

18 Charles Riggins, "To Brother and Sister," February 21, 1862, MG24, F98, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

19 Charles Riggins, "To Brother," March 2, 1862.

cause. He constantly complained about his lack of promotion. "Captain told me of all the boys I was sure to get an office once we reached the regiment." In another letter he wrote: "most of the second Lieutenants have to be appointed yet so I stand a chance of getting some office if I behave myself," and later: "I think that I will be a Sergeant before long." He did not think, however, that "a recommendation [for a promotion] from Mrs Currie would do any good over here I have got to rise by my own good conduct and industry."²⁰ He then went to see the captain about obtaining a commission, but did not receive one.

I thought that I could get a commission, but I am Corpl. yet & no chance of getting any higher. If you have no friends or money good bye to commissions unless you get in a battle & kill ten or twelve Rebel Generals.²¹

One may wonder if Riggins was even a corporal though, or if he just told his folks that. In one letter, he asked his mother not to address her letters to him as Corporal. "I will tell you the reasons by & by when I get a chance."²² At the same time, the excitement and romance of military life probably had its influence. "I have my regimentals on, get plenty to eat and drink and a good bed...I like it very well." Later he wrote that "we have good times here" He liked to talk about the brass bands and the cheering as troops marched off to war. Riggins though, had only just arrived in camp. His buoyant mood

²⁰ Charles Riggins, "To Brother," March 2, 1862 and March 26, 1862; "To Brother and Sister," April 11, 1862; May 20, 1862.

²¹ Charles Riggins, "To Sister," July 27, 1862.

²² Charles Riggins, "To Mother," September 28, 1862.

reversed itself over the next several months, as the reality of soldiering sank in.

When Riggins finally saw the conditions at the front he grew despondent. He came to regret his decision to enlist, and his depression prevented him from caring who won the war.

I am quite shure that if I was home now I would let the south whip the north or vic versa or any other way for all I would care, it is all well enough soldiering is very nice in peace & it is all nice enough to fight for ones country but when you are treated as slaves & that too worse than the slaves at the south.²³

Soldiering had lost its flavour, and he wanted out. "Dear sister I am sick of this service & I wish I could get out of it but I am tight -- this will learn me a lesson I will not soon forget." Later he told his sister,

you may write to Lord Lyons [British Minister at Washington] & try to get me out if you can -- try very hard if you please -- I want to get out very bad - - tell him that I enlisted under eighteen & that I am only five months over it now. Tell him that I am a British Subject but do not say anything to anyone about it.²⁴

In September 1862, about five months after enlisting, he "wondered how long it [would] take to get my discharge...I want out in the worst way."²⁵

John Sanders of Chatham, Canada West, also wanted out. In March 1864 he wrote his wife: "I am sorry that I did not take your advice and remain

²³ Charles Riggins, "To Sister," July 27, 1862.

²⁴ Charles Riggins, "To Sister," August 9, 1862.

²⁵ Charles Riggins, "To Sister," September 9, 1862.

in Chatham...if I knew how to get out of the service I would do so."²⁶ But then, soldiers of all nationalities wanted out of the army at one time or another.

While the pursuit of rank might have attracted Charles Riggins, status was definitely on the mind of the mother of one BNA. Mrs. Walker, of Montreal, wrote to President Lincoln about the part her son was playing in the war. The letter apparently never reached Lincoln; the governor general's office intercepted it. In it, she asked for her son's release from the Union army, claiming that he had been tricked into the service while visiting family in New York.

He is now serving as a private soldier, which is far below his station as he is of a family who are and have always been of the highest respectability and immediately connected with [some] of the Nobility of the British Empire. His absence from your army of so many hundreds of thousands would never be felt, and he is all the world to me...Unless your Excellency would appoint him to some more respectable position.²⁷

During the second half of the war, money was undoubtedly on the minds of many BNAs when they enlisted. Substantial sums could be reaped from either bounty payments or substitution fees. Corporal J. Englis enlisted for the bounty, but lost most of it. He then wrote to the governor general asking for help in securing his discharge.

²⁶ John Sanders, "To Wife," March 19, 1864, Chatham Weekly Planet, April 14, 1864.

²⁷ Mrs. Walker, "To President Lincoln," November 8, 1864, British Military Records, RG8, Vol. 698, #452, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

Dear Friend I now take my pen in hand to inform you that I was enlisted under fouse pretences The man that enlisted I don't know his name He promised to give me \$325 Dollars And all I got was 100 I came from [--] to newyork citty as a sailor And they layed out Such inducements as I have Aforsaid and wronged me out of it.²⁸

Other BNAs enlisted as substitutes for American conscripts determined to avoid military service. Substitution fees were similar in amount to the bounties, and many times substitutes received bounties as well. Francis Coulon was one BNA who enlisted as a substitute. He was born in Canada East and enlisted in Parishville, New York. The records show that he received a \$700 bounty from the county, in addition to any substitute fee he might have received. Peter Daly was another BNA who enlisted as a substitute but, as he explained in his letter to the governor general, he had been robbed of his fee and wanted out of the service. Daly wrote that he had originally been pressed into the Southern army, but obtained an honourable discharge in 1863. He then made his way north where he enlisted in the Northern army. "I took a Drafted mans Place and He gave me 25 Dollars and said He would send me more when I was in the army but my Lord He Has Not Done as He said He would, and I have been in the service of the united states nine months."²⁹

In July 1864, Mr. Onimet, the father of a BNA from Montreal, wrote the US Consul to secure his son's release from the Union army. Instead of

²⁸ Corporal J. Englis, "To Governor General," January 21, 1864, Civil Secretary's Correspondence, Governor General's Office Record Group, RG7, G20, Vol. 97 - 98, #11051, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

²⁹ Peter Daly, "To Governor General," April 25, 1864, Civil Secretary's Correspondence, Governor General's Office Record Group, RG7, G20, Vol. 99 - 100, #11217, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

begging for his son's discharge as so many other distraught parents did, Mr. Onimet offered to supply two substitutes in exchange for his son. The consul wrote to American Secretary of State Seward on his behalf, and shortly thereafter the War Department issued Special Order number 242 which ordered the exchange.³⁰

It cannot be denied that some BNAs made a practice of deserting once they received their bounty. This practice, known as bounty jumping, was practiced by men of all nationalities, and was quite prevalent in the later stages of the war. The Niagara Mail reported one case by a local man named William McMillian. He had jumped the bounty twice, but was captured at Syracuse.³¹ The NovaScotian reported on April 3, 1865, that "two St. John men convicted by the US military court of having been engaged in bounty jumping, have been shot." There were several reports of 'Canadian' bounty jumpers, several of whom faced the firing squad. However, not all were shot; execution of bounty jumpers was not all that common. In fact, only 18 BNAs were executed during the rebellion, and these for various military infractions.³²

Other BNAs were drafted into service, some illegally. Edward McPike wrote to the governor general about two of his sons who had been unlawfully conscripted. One son, he said, had been a resident of Vermont for five years, while the other had only been in the States for about two months. Neither son had declared his intention to become a citizen, nor had they voted in an

30 US Consul in Montreal, "To Secretary of State Seward," July 4, 1864, Despatches from the US Consul in Montreal, January 1864 to October 1864, Vol. 5, #57, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

31 The Niagara Mail, April 27, 1864.

32 Andrew Moxley and Tom Brooks, "Drums Across the Border, Canadians in the American Civil War," Esprit de Corps, Canadian Military, Then and Now 1.6 (November 1991): 59.

American election (so said the father). The British government made efforts to secure their release, but it is not known if they were successful.³³ Henry Lane, like the Pike boys, was also drafted. He had no intention to fight, and applied to Lord Lyons for help. Lane though, had voted in 1860 and in 1861, and was therefore denied satisfaction, as the American government refused to grant discharges to foreigners who had exercised the franchise.³⁴ Peter Anderson, who had resided in the Southern States before the war, was also drafted, but into the Confederate States service. After serving fourteen months, he was captured at Vicksburg and made a prisoner at Johnston's Island in Lake Erie. His father lived across the lake in Guelph, Canada West, and petitioned Lord Lyons to help secure his son's release. Lord Lyons appealed to the American government, but release was denied.³⁵

Job prospects lured some BNAs into the ranks. John Woods of Chatham, Canada West, met with unexpected complications. It seems Woods, a nineteen year old apprentice blacksmith from Chatham, believed he could enlist and not have to fight. When in Detroit he was "induced," reported the Planet, to enlist on condition that he would be employed to shoe horses in the cavalry at \$50 a month. He had no idea that he could be compelled to fight, and was surprised when he was ordered into the ranks with the regular volunteers and told to take a musket.³⁶

33 Civil Secretary's Letterbook; Civil Secretary's Correspondence, Governor General's Record Group, RG7, G17, Vol. 18, #10818; RG7, G20, Vol. 95 - 96, #10318, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

34 Despatches from the British Minister at Washington, RG7, G6, Vol. 15, #11740, Governor General's Office Record Group, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

35 Civil Secretary's Correspondence, Vol. 97 - 98, #10948.

36 Chatham Weekly Planet, September 5, 1861.

Not all who went in search of work had enlistment on their minds. In an ironic twist of events, the large influx of American draft dodgers and deserters into the provinces dampened employment opportunities and reduced wages for local boys, forcing them southwards into American industry, which at the time was experiencing a labour shortage due to the war's manpower demands. When in the United States, these BNAs became targets for bounty brokers looking to fill troop quotas, and many who were originally searching for work landed in the Union army.³⁷ D. Price was a BNA who thought he had secured a job in the Mid-West, but instead, landed on a navy man-of-war. He wrote to his wife July 20, 1864:

I told you in my other letters that when I was in Chicago, on that Monday I met my boss and we went with the train to [Kansas] to our work, he told all the men that he had orders to take us to Cairo [Illinois]... on the Mississippi river, then he told us that we had to go on board the steam boat, but, what was our astonishment next morning to find ourselves on board a man of war. We looked for our boss to know the meaning of all this, but he was not to be found any where, we went to the captain to know why we were kept on board. What was our astonishment, he told us that we were navy recruits. We remonstrated with him -- He showed us a paper stating that we enlisted of our own accord, I told him I would appeal to the British Consul, but he told me that it would not be of any use because of them cursed forged papers.³⁸

³⁷ Robin Winks, Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years, (1960; Montreal: Harvest House Ltd., 1971) 203 - 204; Fred Landon, Western Ontario and the American Frontier, (1941; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1967) 212.

³⁸ D. Price, "To Wife," July 20, 1864, Civil Secretary's Correspondence, RG7, G20, Vol. 101 - 102, #11493.

Charles Lloyd was another man seeking work in the US. He too, found himself in a blue uniform, and wrote his wife:

I could not get anything to do in detroit so I started down to Buffalo on Thursday evening got lodging for the night next morning to look for work when I was a going along the street I spoke to a man and asked him if he knew where I could get some work he told me that he could if I went with him in going along he asked me to have something to drink I told him that I drank nothing at all he then asked me to go and have a drink of pop which I took not thinking that he was going to drug it for me and after I had drank it about 5 minutes I was quite stupid and did not remember anything after until about 7 o'clock the next morning and then I was under guard [and in the Union army].³⁹

Many BNAs are said to have been crimped into the American service. However, there is much confusion over the term crimp. Today, the term normally refers to men who apply force to secure recruits. During the Civil War though, anyone recruiting in the provinces, whether they used force or not, was considered to be a crimp. Alternate terms employed by the press to describe such men were: enlistment broker, recruiting agent, bounty broker, substitute broker, rogue, villain, scoundrel, and so on. By contemporary standards, any BNA enlisting through the agency of a broker -- even willingly -- was crimped, and most new recruits, whatever their nationality, passed through the hands of enlistment brokers during the second half of the war.⁴⁰ But historians who have used the word crimp, or crimping, have done so to

³⁹ Charles Lloyd, "To Sarah," November 5, 1863, Civil Secretary's Correspondence, Vol. 97 - 98, #10950.

⁴⁰ Eugene Murdock, Patriotism Limited, 1862 - 1865. The Civil War Draft and the Bounty System, (Kent State University Press, 1967) 107.

describe forced enlistments, thus blurring the meaning as originally applied. As a result, when historians analyze evidence, they often misinterpret the word *crimp*, and with it, the method by which BNAs entered the Union army. This misunderstanding has led some historians to believe that BNAs were more often victims than volunteers.⁴¹

Forced enlistments made up a negligible percentage of BNAs who served. Newspapers, even those with pro-Southern leanings, did not print many impressment stories. To be sure, newspapers related stories about *crimps*, but very rarely did they ever discuss a forced enlistment. There were some reports of kidnapping, and others about how men who crossed the border to work in a factory ended in the army, but nothing to lend support to the position that impressment of British subjects was the typical method of enlistment. Normally, newspapers simply admonished their readers to be wary of unscrupulous men promising substantial enlistment bounties; men, the papers said, who robbed unsuspecting recruits of their dues.⁴² Most often, newspapers carried sensational stories about soldiers deserting the British

⁴¹ See, for example, Marguerite Hamer "Luring Canadian Soldiers Into Union Lines During the War Between the States," Canadian Historical Review 27.2 (1946): 150 - 162; William Raney "Recruiting and Crimping in Canada for the Northern Forces, 1861 - 1865," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review 9 (June 1922 to March 1923): 21 - 33; Winks, Canada and the United States; Ella Lonn, Foreigners. Each speaks at some length about forced enlistments, but spends little time, if any, on the fact that most men willingly followed the *crimp* to the recruiting station. Robin Winks defined *crimping* thus: "Crimping was a vicious practice whereby the British North American virtually would be kidnapped and enlisted in the Northern armies, often while under the influence of drugs." This quote is found in his work "The Creation of a Myth: 'Canadian' Enlistments in the Northern Armies During the American Civil War," Canadian Historical Review 39.1 (March, 1958): 38, footnote 51.

⁴² For example, Chatham Weekly Planet, February 25, 1864; Niagara Mail, December 14, 1864; NovaScotian, January 18, 1864, September 5, 1864.

army for the Union blue, not articles about brokers recruiting ordinary citizens.⁴³ Overall, Lord Lyons only made 235 representations to the US government on behalf of individuals forced into the American service, and that was for the entire British Empire, not just the North American provinces.⁴⁴ Of course, many BNAs who were forced into the Union army might not have known, or been able to write to the governor general or Lord Lyons, so the number who did write were likely not all who were forced to 'volunteer.'

Coercion may not have been the standard method for obtaining BNAs, but that does not diminish the suffering of those compelled to serve. In May 1864, crimps took Thomas Miller and William Fisher at gun point. These two men were mending their boat on the Canadian side of the Detroit River when a boat-load of Americans landed above them. Refusing to go with the Americans as demanded, Miller was about to use his axe in defence when he saw the revolvers of his opponents. Both Miller and Fisher found themselves in an American prison on trumped up charges of theft. Their captors gave them the choice of enlisting in the American army, or remaining in jail. Fisher enlisted, Miller chose jail. It was pointless to appeal to American authorities in the area, as one of the kidnappers was the deputy sheriff and peace officer. The case eventually found its way to Lord Lyons

⁴³ For example, Chatham Weekly Planet, November 19, 1863; St Andrews Standard, November 12, 1862; Niagara Mail, August 6, 1862; NovaScotian May 20, 1861. Desertions plagued the British army stationed in British North America. John W. Spurr, "Garrison and Community," To Preserve and Defend, Essays on Kingston in the Nineteenth Century, ed. Gerald Tulchinsky, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976) 108, wrote that the 47th Lancashire, in one year at Kingston, Canada West, lost 64 men through desertions.

⁴⁴ Eugene Murdock, Patriotism 114; Lonn, Foreigners 469.

who petitioned Secretary of State Seward. After many months Seward agreed that the two were wrongfully imprisoned, and ordered their release. Fisher could not be found, having deserted at the first opportunity. Miller was released and, in 1866, was still trying to obtain compensation for his wrongful imprisonment.⁴⁵

Andrew Cunningham of Montreal, was also illegally recruited. In 1864 he wrote to Lord Lyons for help. When word of his discharge finally came, Lyons learned Cunningham had died in battle. Then there was Alexander Anderson, described as "an indiscreet youth," age 16. He also had the misfortune to enter the United States service in 1864 after being "wiled off to the States by a Canadian broker, and while under the influence of intoxicating drink, enlisted in the...cavalry."⁴⁶

If crimps used force to secure a BNA, the British government would act. But the government had to be convinced that chicanery was employed before it made efforts to secure the victim's release. The governor general's office sent many letters to frantic parents stating that "as your son was not drafted against his will but appears to have enlisted voluntarily it is not in the Governor General's power to interfere." Exactly what force needed to be applied was indicated in several responses to people seeking a discharge for themselves or loved ones. For example, in the case of James Cunningham, the secretary determined that he had been neither drugged nor intoxicated when he enlisted. In fact, he had received a bounty and had sent a portion of it home to Canada. The government refused to intervene; but "the case

⁴⁵ Despatches from the British Minister at Washington, RG7, G6, Vol. 13, #13, 18, 20, 22, Civil Secretary's Letterbook, RG7, G17, Vol. 20, #11367.

⁴⁶ Civil Secretary's Letterbook, RG7, G17, Vol. 20, #11532; British Military Records, RG8, Vol. 698, #114.

would be different," wrote the civil secretary, "if Cunningham had...enlisted when unconscious of what he was doing."⁴⁷

With so many false alarms reaching the civil secretary's office, the secretary who answered the letters appeared, on occasion, fed-up with discharge requests:

the fact that the man whose discharge is sought for is a British Subject gives him no right to the protection of the British Government. He forfeited his claim to that protection when he, contrary to the injunctions of the Queen's Proclamation, entered the military service of a Foreign Power.⁴⁸

Sometimes the secretary added: "[he] must abide by the consequences of his own act." Often he wrote on letters requesting government assistance: "send usual answer," meaning, 'sorry, we cannot help you'.⁴⁹ During the first year of the war males under eighteen who had enlisted without their parents' consent could, according to US law, obtain a discharge. The British government made the most of the law, and secured the release of several BNAs. The American government repealed the law in 1862 though, which effectively blocked this avenue of escape.

Nobody knows how many crimps operated in the provinces. It is probable that more escaped justice than were apprehended. The British Military Records indicate that the courts convicted ninety-one crimps in 1864 and 1865, two of whom were women.⁵⁰ This figure does not include the

⁴⁷ Civil Secretary's Letterbook, RG7, G17, Vol. 20, #10433.

⁴⁸ Civil Secretary's Letterbook, RG7, G17, Vol. 19, #10570.

⁴⁹ Civil Secretary's Letterbook, RG7, G17, Vol. 18, #10334; Vol. 19, #11130.

⁵⁰ British Military Records, RG8, Vol. 698, #42, 569; Vol. 699, #275; Civil Secretary's Letterbook, RG7, G17, Vol. 101 - 102, #11362.

Maritimes; but contained in the NovaScotian were reports on at least twenty-six crimps, who undoubtedly represented the tip of the iceberg of crimping activity in the Atlantic provinces. Recruiting was a very brisk activity in British North America.

2.3 BNAs' Civil War Experiences

BNAs wrote on a wide assortment of topics. Battle stories were popular, especially the important part the writer played, and the narrow escapes he faced. Camp life was another topic discussed, but was usually dismissed as unimportant and uninteresting so not much detail was given. In one diary, the author recorded that there was nothing new to report, even though he was at the siege of Vicksburg at the time: "the same old thing Cannonading very warm today."⁵¹ Many, in the mode of tourists, described to folks back home the magnificent sights they had seen over the course of their marches. Some BNAs gave deep thought to politics, and most felt concern for the well-being of their families. Grumbling and complaining took up a great deal of space in their letters, and usually with good reason. They complained about the lack of pay, or the slowness in which it came, the food, their health, their comfort or lack thereof; they complained about their officers, and about the dearth of letters from loved ones. The lack of letters from home drove some men to accuse their families of forgetting them altogether. News from home was one thing BNAs craved: how is the farm

⁵¹ Wentworth Dow, "The Civil War Diaries of Wentworth Dow," June 9, 1863, ed. G. Wayne Dow; G. Wayne Dow family papers, page 96.

doing? Don't forget to do this, that, or the other thing. How is uncle so and so? What do people think about the war? Send me a newspaper every week. The content of BNA letters closely parallels that of their American counterpart. However, laced throughout BNA writings is a distinct BNA Civil War experience. For example, while all soldiers worried about the welfare of their families, many BNAs had to deal with the knowledge that their home, British North America, was often openly supportive of the South. Also, as a war between Britain and the United States was a very real possibility, many BNAs felt anxious that they may have to take up arms against their native land, and they wrote about this in their letters. As well, BNAs were witnesses of, and participants in the rebellion's greatest battles and campaigns: First and Second Bull Run, Antietam, Shiloh, Gettysburg, Atlanta, and others. Their letters teach us about life as a BNA in the Union army, and their experiences help refine our reading and understanding of British North Americans who fought in the American Civil War.

Many BNAs were likely further away from home than they had ever been, and took advantage of the war to do some sightseeing. The countryside received a great deal of comment. "The country around Washington," wrote John Stuart, a soldier from Chatham, Canada West, "is very beautiful and the Potomac River is a splendid sight as you view it from its lofty banks. In fact the country in general here is beautiful."⁵² Captain W.H. Clipperton wrote about the country too. "I am not a good hand at describing scenery, or I would endeavour to give you a pen and ink sketch of our journey through Pennsylvania, but take my word for it, it was mountainous, grand,

⁵² John Stuart, "To Sylvester Hadley," 1862, Chatham Weekly Planet, March 6, 1862.

picturesque and barren.”⁵³ Norman Wade, of Nova Scotia, thought “nothing [could] exceed the beautiful scenery of this river [the Rappahannock River]. The air was fragrant with the perfume of the fruit trees, and the flowers of which in some instances the banks were literally covered.”⁵⁴

BNAs also described cities, their architecture and their social life. John Campbell’s enthusiasm for the city of Washington gushes from his letter as he relates to his father the sights to be seen.

Father I wish you could see Some of the Curiosities of Washington citty it would be a delight to see it, the Capital of the united states [has] the nices Buildings that I ever saw it looks more like the Creator w[or]ks then tne work of man upon earth...[at] the Smithsonian Institute a man Can see all the old things that are over five Hundred years [and] statutes of all the Big men there was in them days...O it is worth any money to get asight of them.⁵⁵

Solomon McColl of Elgin, Canada West, described Savannah, Georgia and its monuments:

Savannah is very compactly built of brick, stone, and marble. The 1st Presbyterian Church is a spacious building -- built of white marble and costing \$600,000....I am told the church is still here in which John Wesley and George Whitefield preached; I was in it.⁵⁶

⁵³ Captain W. H. Clipperton, “To Friend Stevenson,” July 22, 1863, Chatham Weekly Planet, August 6, 1863.

⁵⁴ Norman Wade, “To Parents,” April 29, 1862, “Letters of Norman Wade,” 138 - 139.

⁵⁵ John Campbell, “To Father,” February 17, 1862.

⁵⁶ Solomon McColl, “To Brother,” May 4, 1865, Elgin Military Museum, St. Thomas, Ontario.

Cyrille Fountain, a French Canadian, wrote in his diary on January 3, 1864, that he and "most all the boys," while in Baltimore, "went to Teheatre [and] had a nice time." On February 6, 1864, he found himself in "Newyork City," where "we had pictures taken and went to Barnum Teheater" and saw "3 of the biggest men in the world."⁵⁷

Not everyone was impressed with what they saw. Robert Scott, of Galt, Canada West, thought Frankfort, Kentucky a "mean looking place to be a capital of a State. It resembles Dundas [Canada West?], only that it is bound all round by a rugged mountain, with the Kentucky river running round about three sides of the town." On the other hand, the statue of Daniel Boone and the "Soldiers Monument, erected by the State for her brave soldiers, which must have cost well on for \$75,000," did impress Scott.⁵⁸

The farmers among the BNAs were often more curious about the crops, fields and farm animals than they were about cities. Henry Jackson was always watching the fields.

It appears that they drill most of there wheat, in these parts of Md. I cannot fancy the waggons and ploughs in use here, they look rather ancient looking in my opinion, The farmers here run there land or let it run to much into weeds wheat and rye for the good of the country.

⁵⁷ Cyrille Fountain, "An Essex County Soldier in the Civil War: the Diary of Cyrille Fountain," New York History, ed. Donald Chipman, 66.3 (July 1985): 283 - 284.

⁵⁸ Robert Scott, "To Walter Scott," October 11, 1862, Galt Reporter, October 25, 1862: 2. Clipping supplied by the Kitchener Public Library.

In the following spring Jackson noted how "Fall wheat looks fine and green generally but not very strong it looks as if it had been sown late. If you have an early spring in Canada I expect you will be busy ploughing and sowing before this reaches you." Towards the middle of summer he wrote that the "grass seems to be of a verry course quality here, corn will soon be fit to cook. I have seen corn 8 or 9 feet high with seldom more than one ear to a stalk." Jackson even had opinions on crops that he probably never grew himself: "the young cotton is in drills and requires hoeing or thinning out, like turnips in drill." He also commented on the quality of the land. "This must be first rate fruit country judging from appearance. There is lots of peaches growing wild round the fields, peaches will soon be fit to use green." He liked the taste of one particular fruit, though he did not know what it was. "We are using plums at present as the boys call them but I guess they are not plums they appear to be about half way between peaches and plums. They are first rate stewed, but require a good deal of sugar."⁵⁹

Passing armies took a toll on the crops though, as Henry Wideman, of Markham, Canada West, related to his brother. "Planters are nearly through with harvesting where there are no armies and there is nothing to harvest where the army goes."⁶⁰

On the other hand, Robert Scott did not see any tilled land in Kentucky.

A difference of country was at once visible from that of our preceding march. Instead of the towering cliff there lay the beautiful rolling field, clad in green, as there is not much sowing or

⁵⁹ Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," September 30, 1862; October 1, 1862; June 21, 1863; "To Aunt and Uncle," April 1, 1863.

⁶⁰ Henry Wideman, "To Brother," July 15, 1864, Markham Museum, Markham, Ontario.

reaping done here. In my travels in Kentucky I don't remember ever seeing a person have hold of a plough.⁶¹

Parick O'Kane of New Brunswick, commented on the livestock.

They have a queer breed of Pork here. They have a l--t and a snout as long as your arm. (This very moment, their is a savage looking fellowing chawing Peach stones within three feet of me.) And they have a hump on them like a dromedary, and the bristles on their back sticks straight up. their are very fine mules here, they are fully as large as horses. They are gentle and are frequently used for the saddle. Even the ladies sometimes ride on the backs of the fellows of extravagant ears. Sheep are more plentifull than they are in Illinois.⁶²

BNAs also commented on Southerners and Southern society. Comments were not always complimentary, but when at war the enemy is rarely beloved. Solomon McColl, who took part in General Sherman's 'March to the Sea' campaign, thought it "would certainly be difficult to find a prouder, or more haughty, spirited people than the would be aristocracy of South Carolina." They were "miserable vagabonds" who deserved the fate the army laid on them.⁶³ Andrew Geddes, who had once lived in Elgin, Canada West, wrote to his father in Iowa from a Confederate prison. "You may be assured I love the Secesh. They are overbearing, selfish and insulting because they know no better. Do not give yourselves any uneasiness...I can stand their outlandish treatment."⁶⁴ Henry Jackson, whose series of letters

61 Robert Scott, "To Walter Scott," October 11, 1862.

62 Patrick O'Kane, "To Unknown," date unknown.

63 Solomon McColl, "To Brother," May 4, 1865.

64 Andrew Geddes, "To Parents," May 22, 1862, CHT, August 28, 1862, Elgin Military Museum, St. Thomas, Ontario.

comment on so much, also commented on Southerners. "The poorer class of whites in the south are verry ignorant they are learning by experiance the riches and power of the North." Later he wrote that "it appears to one that the poor whites in the south are in a great measure as well as the negro himself he is ignorant, and he is used by the rich as so many tools to work out their purpose." He came to regard the poor whites as worse off than the slave. "There is a class in the south that is in a worse condition I have no doubt than the slaves that is the poor whites, they are held under a military despotism that is worse than slavery." Jackson also thought the farmers in the South "have a verry lasy time of it...[they ride] the horses while a darkie holds the plough."⁶⁵

As well, BNAs expressed opinions on the quality of Southern soldiers. Occasionally BNAs showed great respect for their fighting prowess, more so as the war progressed. "Losses were heavy on both sides...They fought like devils, and better soldiers cannot be than those Southerners."⁶⁶ Most letters though, described, or implied that Confederate soldiers were inferior to Union men in the military art. "I find it takes a great many pounds of shot to kill a man, for the Rebels don't serve their artillery as well as we do." Later the same man reported how he had "never seen a more demoralized crowd in my life; why, one of our men would ride up to a squad of from 15 to 20 men, and demand their surrender, and the Rebels would just lay down their arms."⁶⁷ One fellow wrote to his brother that "all is quiet here at present and the Rebs are falling back to get out of our reach and keep their men from

⁶⁵ Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," October 1, 1862; October 8, 1862; January 8, 1863.

⁶⁶ Ziba P. Hurhart, "To J. B. Campbell," May 24, 1864, Chatham Weekly Planet, June 16, 1864.

⁶⁷ Captain W. H. Clipperton, "To Friend Stevenson," July 22, 1863.

deserting as they are coming in dayly sometimes singly & sometimes squads of 10 or more."⁶⁸ Henry Jackson believed the rebel soldiers were all Union men at heart, but had been forced against their will into the Confederate army.⁶⁹

Descriptions of Southern soldiers as ignorant and dirty came across in some BNA letters. Andrew Geddes thought the Confederate ranks were filled with soldiers "from the low class of citizens, and [who had] been forced into service."⁷⁰ As far as Confederate conditions went, Henry Jackson wrote: "the rebels are verry hard up for clothing and shoes" and were

poorly clad in flax or cotton goods, as dirty as they can be you would think so if you saw them. They are mostly tall young men narrow shouldered, shallowbreasted hungry looking fellows...with long hair sallow complexion blue eyes.⁷¹

On the other hand, Charles Riggins wrote: "They may say what they please about the Secesh soldiers faring hard but we fare just as bad."⁷²

Some BNAs recounted stories of Southern atrocities committed on Union troops. How much truth there is to these stories is unknown, but both the North and the South occasionally charged each other with unnecessary cruelty. "The story of Southerners bayoneting our wounded is quite true. I saw it with my own eyes."⁷³ Others saw Southern soldiers as "wretches," "ghouls" of the battlefield who plundered "the dead, and if necessary, to

⁶⁸ Henry Wideman, "To Brother," January 17, 1864.

⁶⁹ Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," October 1, 1862.

⁷⁰ Andrew Geddes, "To Parents," May 22, 1862.

⁷¹ Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," October 8, 1862.

⁷² Charles Riggins, "To Mother," September 28, 1862.

⁷³ Sergeant C. McFadden, "To Friend," July 26, 1861, NovaScotian, August 12, 1861.

attain their vile ends, murdering the wounded."⁷⁴ Many thought the rebels killed without hesitation: "While we were on review the rebel cavalry made a dash at our picket lines...killing two and literally butchering them. They tied them to stakes and riddled them with bullets, then cut their dead bodies in pieces with their sabres."⁷⁵ Interestingly, only letters found in newspapers mentioned atrocities, which perhaps says more about reporting and publishing news in British North America than it does about the BNA.

In camp BNAs stopped being tourists and began to be soldiers. Charles Riggins described his daily routine:

We have to get up at five in the morning, breakfast at 8, drill with the company from 9 to 10, from 10 to 12 drill with the non-commissioned officers, dinner at two, drill from two to three, from three to five lay around or clean up, roll call at six, supper seven, get ready for the night by that time it is nine o'clock, the roll call again and at a quarter after nine all lights must be extinguished and no talking allowed.⁷⁶

BNAs who wrote about army officers generally had few positive comments. "The North would have had the South whipped if it had not been for the traitor Generals and Senators that we had ruling us," wrote Robert Scott in October 1862.⁷⁷ Augustus Sorg used the label 'traitor' as well. "One of our generals...I believe is a traitor to his country."⁷⁸ Nelson Rice listed a number of reasons why the Union lost the Battle of Bull Run in 1861,

⁷⁴ Charles H. Sewell, 1862, Niagara Mail, March 11, 1863.

⁷⁵ G.A.G., "To Unknown," November 21, 1861, Globe, December 2, 1861. Copied from the Ingersoll Chronicle, date unknown.

⁷⁶ Charles Riggins, "To Brother and Sister," May 10, 1862.

⁷⁷ Robert Scott, "To Walter Scott," October 11, 1862.

⁷⁸ Augustus Sorg, "To Jacob," September 31, 1864.

one reason given was the officers. "The officers (that is some of them) were not quite so brave as was expected."⁷⁹ Charles Riggins held officers in the greatest contempt, even though he desperately wanted to be one. According to Riggins, the officers took all the best food, "lots of vegetables, etc.," while suppling the soldiers with "hard crackers" and "nasty coffee." He "got half a lemmon & four potatoes one day & that was all -- I did not see any oranges or onions as yet -- the officers get all them, they live well themselves & dont care what we get ourselves."⁸⁰ Food was not the only item some officers helped themselves to. Solomon McColl worked six weeks chopping wood for one dollar per cord, but "received only two dollars...our gallant officers pocketing the balance."⁸¹

Personal comfort was always a hot topic for BNAs. The heat down south was undoubtedly the worst many BNAs had experienced. "It is awful hot here today so that I cant bear to be outside of my tent." It just kept getting hotter. "It is warmer here than it is beside the kitchen stove in the warmest day in August but they say that it will be twice as hot."⁸² Cyrille Fountain noted that "it has been & awful Warm day quite a lot of men fell dead in road by being Sunstroke."⁸³ While at Vicksburg, Wentworth Dow, who was originally from New Brunswick, recorded in his diary that June 8, 1863 was "very warm thermometer stood 120."⁸⁴ In the winter however, the South could be cold. William Mackenzie wrote: "So we spent part of the winter [in

79 Nelson Rice, "To Sister," July 28, 1861, Crystal Dapp family papers.

80 Charles Riggins, "To Sister," July 27, August 9, 1862.

81 Solomon McColl, "To Brother," May 4, 1865.

82 Charles Riggins, "To Brother and Sister," June 22, 1862; "To Sister," July 27, 1862.

83 Cyrille Fountain Diary, August 11, 1864, 304.

84 Wentworth Dow Diaries, June 8, 1863, 96.

the South], and the weather, though usually not so severe in the South as in the North, was as cold as I ever felt it in Canada."⁸⁵

Nevertheless, BNAs made the most of their situation. Winter quarters for John Campbell were quite comfortable. He was living in "Small log Huts and canvas tents on them for a roof four in a tent it is Comfort."⁸⁶ Others found comfort wherever they could. "On the night of the thirteenth," wrote Ziba P. Hurhart, of Chatham, Canada West, "we marched about three miles and bivouacked for the night in mud and dirt, but slept like a lot of pigs till sunrise."⁸⁷ Henry Jackson found hotel-like comfort in an unusual bed.

we try to make ourselves as comfortable as as possible under circumstances. We live in a corn crib it is quite airy and nice to sleep in, far better than the place we were before we came here, by the side of a wheat stack.⁸⁸

Cyrille Fountain, writing in the winter of 1864, "found [himself] as well as [he] might Expect after laying on the Ice ail night."⁸⁹ Charles Riggins went to bed hungry one night in a "horse shed with no straw or nothing. It was awful cold at night, I was almost froze."⁹⁰

Health was another common topic for BNAs, just as it was for most Union soldiers. BNAs were either inquiring about the health of their families, or relating the state of their own. Often the first words written by a BNA were about his state of health. "Dear Jennett I [take] this oppertunity of

85 William Mackenzie, "To Charley," April 21, 1862, #1509.

86 John Campbell, "To Father," February 17, 1862.

87 Ziba P. Hurhart, "To J. B. Campbell," May 24, 1864.

88 Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," October 8, 1862.

89 Cyrille Fountain Diary, December 13, 1864, 315.

90 Charles Riggins, "To Brother and Sister," May 30, 1862.

writing the few lines to you hoping they will find you in good health as they leave me at present."⁹¹ Some BNAs suffered ill health constantly, or at least complained that they did, or told stories of the illnesses raging through the camps. Charles Riggins told his family that

Four of our Company are in the hospital -- Sick with the measles. Two of them slept in the same tent with me for about a week. I have had a bad headache for about three days...I have broke out all over with a kind of rash & they itch awful bad.

Later he complained that he "had a touch of the rheumatism since I have been here & the headache once so I think that is pretty well but I am awful weak." In August he reported that "there were three thousand sick men sent away yesterday. There had been five men buried since last night & as I write this they are carrying another one out. They are dying all over the whole army forty & fifty every day." This was not news to cheer anxious relations. "I am broke out all over except the face with mattery sores, so that I can hardly set or lay down -- every morning when I get up my bones ache horribly." He asked his sister to send him a fine-toothed comb as "we are chuck full of lice of every sort down here -- it is hard work to keep clean and the creek where we used to go to wash is full of them so that most of us have stopped going down to bath there."⁹² For William Mackenzie, "to be sick in a dreary region, away from friends and home is the greatest trial a soldier has to bear."⁹³

⁹¹ Alexander Camron, "To Jennett," February 7, 1864, Andrew Gledhill family papers.

⁹² Charles Riggins, "To Brother and Sister," June 22, 1862; "To Sister," July 27, 1862; August 9, 1862.

⁹³ William MacKenzie, "To Charley," April 21, 1862, #1509.

Disease killed most BNAs, as it did most Union soldiers. Of the 360,000 or so Union deaths, about 110,000 were the result battle related injuries.⁹⁴ Most men died of disease. James Craig, who had originally come from New Brunswick, but had settled in Maine in the early 1850s, told his wife that he had "been sick four weeks all but one day I have been in the Hospital three weeks and am tired of it I am beginning to get a little better." Craig suffered from dysentery and was sick much of the time while in the service; although he felt thankful, that he was "spared the measles raging among the Soldiers a great deal."⁹⁵ He died of dysentery in December 1863. Typhoid killed many others. One of the four Wolverton brothers of Wolverton, Canada West, died of the disease. A second brother died of small pox.⁹⁶ Peter Anderson of Guelph, wrote to his sister that he had "been for four months at deaths very door, most of the time delerious with the tyfoid fever."⁹⁷ With so many deaths by disease it is not surprising that health was a major topic in BNA letters.

Not all BNAs complained of ill health though. Henry Jackson felt fortunate for his good health.

The 9 corps feels the effects of being down in Mississippi lots of the boys are lame with blotches or boils on their legs, feet & hands but oftenest on their ancles, I must say I have much cause to be thankfull, being in the enjoyment of health &

94 William Fox, Regimental Losses in the American Civil War, 1861 - 1865 (1898; Albany: Morningside Bookshop, 1974) 48 - 49.

95 James Craig, "To Family," January 26, 1862; May 6, 1862, Craig family papers.

96 Lois Darroch Milani, "Four Went to the Civil War," Ontario History 51.4 (1959): 265, 267.

97 Peter Anderson, "To Amie," September 12, 1863, Civil Secretary's Correspondence, Vol. 97-98, #10948.

strength & many other blessings too numerous to mention, but none the less worthy of it.⁹⁸

Solomon McColl was proud of his fine state of health. "I enjoyed excellent health since I left Atlanta, and you would say so too if you saw me."⁹⁹ Others were simply thankful for their good health. "Thanks be to our Father above that my own health is good."¹⁰⁰

BNAs also discussed the quality of army food, and often complained. If half what they said was true, then it is no wonder so many were sick. One Nova Scotian was

heartily sick of the way Uncle Sam treats his soldiers. Nothing but crackers and water will weaken any man in a warm country, with plenty of hard marching to do...I intend returning to Halifax [to] get some rest for a while.¹⁰¹

The complaints made by Charles Riggins are likely representative of those who thought little of army food.

You had ought to taste some of the butter we had one or two days ago -- it was put on the table four or five times and was not touched -- Some of the boys said that it was old enough to talk for its self but it did not.

His daily rations were not particularly appealing. "Each man get a loaf of bread a day, we had some bully beef for breakfast so tuff that we could not eat

98 Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," August 25, 1863.

99 Solomon McColl, "To Brother," May 4, 1865.

100 Henry Wideman, "To Brother," June 15, 1863.

101 Sergeant C. McFadden, "To Friend," July 26, 1861.

it[,] for dinner -- we had rice without any meat or sugar or molasses with it & bread." Later, apparently answering an inquiry by his sister about the food, he said "as for the eating part I am nearly starved." If Riggins thought the food was bad in camp, with its regular delivery, he found it worse on campaign.

At one time we had nothing to eat but what we could forage & that was nothing but apples, peaches, corn & such stuff & stuff it was, the apples were not as good as your cider apples & the peaches were nasty green things, we lived on such trash for two days.

After the battle of Antietam he wrote: "we have been here now for six days & the other day we got mouldy crackers with maggots in our bacon -- nearly ran away with the same -- our coffee is half beans & our sugar is mixed & wet & that is about all we get from day to day." On occasion though, Riggins did devour some delicacies.

When we came here first the Rebels had been in such a hurry to leave that they left a dozen bbls of flour & a lot of hoe cakes already made & all their frying pans, we had good times as long as the flour lasted & that was about one day -- we mixed it with water, salted it & fried it in pork grease & it tasted very good.

"I want to get something good to eat verry bad."¹⁰² During a battle BNAs, like all Union troops, ate what they could get. Ziba Hurhart of Chatham, Canada West, recounted how "During the day [of battle] we drew fresh beef and whisky. The beef we had to cut up while lying on our stomachs and eat

¹⁰² Charles Riggins, "To Brother and Sister," March 19, May 10, May 30, June 10, 1862; "To Sister," July 27, September 9, 1862; "To Mother," September 28, 1862.

raw.”¹⁰³ Alexander Camron lamented: “wee have...no pies to eate hear I wish I had some of them apples that I use to get from you.”¹⁰⁴

Some BNAs thought it was the ‘best kind of food’. “We have plenty to eat of beef pork hard bred and coffee and beans.”¹⁰⁵ Henry Jackson complimented “Uncle Sam” who

furnishe plenty to eat and of a good quality, but it is deficient in variety, it consists of hard bread sometimes or verry often called hard tack but we often call them Military tactics, for shortness of coffee sugar rice beans fresh beef and pork, by far the largest drove of cattle I ever seen was following our army I should think there must have been 2 or 3,000 head of cattle.¹⁰⁶

At times BNAs ate very well. Solomon McColl, with the army during the march to the sea, likely had his share of the “40,000 head of cattle...hogs, turkeys, geese, chickens, [and] ducks” captured from the Confederates. “Every man was his own cook and bottle-washer -- no lack of fresh meat of all kinds, and plenty of rice, molassas, sugar etc.”¹⁰⁷ One fellow from Ingersoll, Canada West, described Thanksgiving in the camp.

We have closed this day by having a blow-out in our own canvass palace, consisting of roast turkeys, cooked in Boston, and sent on by Adams express, New England mince pies, pound cake, fruits, etc., even pumpkins.¹⁰⁸

103 Ziba P. Hurhart, “To J. B. Campbell,” May 24, 1864.

104 Alexander Camron, “To Jennett,” February 7, 1864.

105 James Craig, “To Wife and Children,” ? 21, 1861.

106 Henry Jackson, “To Uncle,” October 8, 1862.

107 Solomon McColl, “To Brother,” May 4, 1865.

108 G.A.G., “To Unknown,” November 21, 1861, Globe, December 2, 1861. Copied from the Ingersoll Chronicle, date unknown.

Cyrille Fountain dined on oysters one "Eavening," and ended the day with "plenty of Singing & Music."¹⁰⁹

All complained of the poor delivery of pay. "We have not been paid for eight months, and do not know when we shall be" was a complaint seen repeatedly in the letters.¹¹⁰ While stationed in Florida, John Sanders of Chatham, Canada West, wrote to his wife that he had not been paid since he joined.¹¹¹ For some, the slowness was a grave concern, as they were trying to send money home to help their families. James Craig continually spoke of money. He was always hoping to be paid soon, so that he could send his wife some cash. "I expect we will be paid off again soon and then I will be able to send you more money, try and keep up good spirits."¹¹² He was trying to keep the finances straight for his family in Maine, while stationed in the Gulf of Mexico. Not that his worries could help; his letters would have taken about two weeks to get home, and replies were even slower coming, so he was continually four to six weeks behind the latest crisis. William Mackenzie, of Toronto, was also trying to send money home.

I shall get enough to pay some little indebtedness of my own and send you \$100. I shall not delay beyond the time I get it...I am well aware that you have a great deal to struggle against, but I cannot do better than I am trying to do.¹¹³

109 Cyrille Fountain Diary, March 9, 1864, 287.

110 Solomon McColl, "To Brother," May 4, 1865.

111 John Sanders, "To Wife," March 19, 1864.

112 James Craig, "To Wife," August 27, 1862.

113 William MacKenzie, "To Libby," October 2, 1864, #1516.

Concern for conditions at home plagued many BNAs, as it plagued most men in the Union army. No matter how small the detail, BNAs wanted to know. "You forgot to write about the grass seed or whether you had any sowed or not I hope you did so let me know the next time you write," wrote James Craig. A lack of letters from home did not help assuage their worries. BNAs expected, and demanded that their families constantly write, and could never understand it when the letters did not regularly arrive.

I was very uneasy about you because it was so long scence I got any word from you the rest of the men got letters and I got none and I thought shurely there must be something the matter...you must try to send me a letter as often as once a month.¹¹⁴

Charles Lloyd also had not heard from his wife, which was especially worrisome to him, as he claimed he was pressed into service, and needed her help getting out.

I have sent you three letters but can get none from you which makes me think that you have forgot me But I hope knot. I wish that you would let me know whether you received six dollars from me or not and one shirt, I wish to know as soon as possible.¹¹⁵

Henry Wideman, who found little to complain about, found fault with those who were slow in writing to him. "I would like to hear from you before leaving on our raid and have received nothing from you for Months

¹¹⁴ James Craig, "To Wife and Children," August 7, 1862. The last letter James Craig had received was dated March 1, 1862.

¹¹⁵ Charles Lloyd, "To Sarah," October 3, 1863, Civil Secretary's Correspondence, Vol. 97-98, #10950.

although I have written regular when opportunity permitted."¹¹⁶ Some BNAs were clearly angry by the lack of letters, as was Augustus Sorg.

Dear brother Jacob: I take this opportunity of writing you once more. This is the fourth time I have written to you and have received no answer yet. I should like to know what is the matter with you folks in Canada, I think you must be all dead.¹¹⁷

Other BNAs apparently gave up writing to their folks, and sent messages through their neighbours to find out how things were at home. "Joshua Senons son John is here with us and wishes me to say that he is well he has written several letters since he came to the Regiment but very seldom gets any and would like to hear how his folks are getting along."¹¹⁸

The provinces, and home, were not far from the thoughts of many BNAs. For Charles Riggins, sitting in church reminded him the most of home: "[at church they played] Old Hundred and it sounded splendid, it made me think about home & I was wishing that I could set in the pew with you at the old church." Later, "There is no Church here, how I wish I was home with you today to hear Mr. Carey preach."¹¹⁹ Fields and crops reminded farmers of home. After talking about Southern farming techniques, Henry Jackson wondered if "the farmers of Paisley Block, [Canada West, were] seeding and enjoying shows and fairs and other business preparing for winter." He tried to make the best of his situation: "I do not fret like as some do that are here about home, home sickness is hurting a

¹¹⁶ Henry Wideman, "To Brother," November 11, 1864.

¹¹⁷ Augustus Sorg, "To Jacob," September 31, 1864.

¹¹⁸ Henry Wideman, "To Brother," October 24, 1864.

¹¹⁹ Charles Riggins, "To Brother and Sister," June 22, 1862; "To Sister," July 27, 1862.

good many here, worse than there wounds...I try to be at home where ever I am but in the bush there was not company enough for me." On occasion BNAs drew comparisons between America and the British colonies. Anything might be compared: the weather, the seasons, or the countryside. Henry Jackson wrote: "We have had two slight frosts here, I suppose that in Canada there must have been quite a number by this time of the season." He also compared the laws. The "civil laws [are] not so well carried out as they should be neither in Canada nor the US the wicked go unpunished often because the best citizens do not wish to be informers." Farmsteads caught Jackson's attention as well. After commenting on the "good breed of cattle," the "best horses in America," the "good roads," and the "best of fences" found in Kentucky, he mentioned that "Farm houses are few and far between to what they are in Paisley Block, [Canada West], though in many cases -- 2, 3 & 4 times as large -- one peculiar feature about them is the dark faces being more numerous than the white."¹²⁰

Most BNAs craved for facts from home. "If you have occasionally a spare copy of the [Chatham Weekly] Planet, direct it to [me]," wrote W. H. Clipperton.¹²¹ Henry Wideman, who had lived in Markham, Canada West, before moving to the States in the 1850s, wondered why he had "received no [Markham] paper from [his brother] for nearly a month."¹²² Henry Jackson was also fact starved. "I should like to have some news from Guelph I have not received any since I left Detroit which is over a month now." News from Canada was always welcome. "I wish to hear good news from Canada when I

¹²⁰ Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," October 1, October 8, 1862; "To Aunt and Uncle," February 17, 1863; "To Aunt and Uncle," April 1, 1863.

¹²¹ Captain W. H. Clipperton, "To Friend Stevenson," July 22, 1863.

¹²² Henry Wideman, "To Brother," June 4, 1863.

get any." At one point after receiving a Canadian paper, Jackson spent his entire letter home on issues affecting Canada; from what to do if war breaks out between the USA and Britain, to a discussion on the lack of a Canadian national identity, to the Reciprocity Treaty, to Canadian politics which "needs improving verry much" because the "Cartier Mac donald administration [gave] the people of Canada...much...to mourn," while relating nothing of himself. He wanted to know how

the elections have gon in Canada. A person would naturally suppose by looking at the political papers of the north that there was a vast of differance between between [sic] them but to come down to the nicety of the thing there is verry little differance in the great political bodies.¹²³

Norman Wade also thought about provincial politics, and could "see the day when the Provinces [would] have a flag of their own yet, although it may be distant."¹²⁴ He was happy to learn that gold was discovered in Nova Scotia. "I am glad to hear that they are finding gold so plentiful as it will be a great help to the Country for I assure you that no place lies so near my heart as old Nova Scotia."¹²⁵

BNAs often recognized one another, and wrote about them in their letters home. "Charles Allen," wrote John Stuart of Chatham, "is in our regiment in Company I, next to Company B. He is well at present, we are at

¹²³ Henry Jackson, "To Uncle," October 1, 1862; May 31, June 21, 1863.

¹²⁴ Norman Wade, "To Brother," March 5, 1862, "Letters of Norman Wade," 134 - 135.

¹²⁵ Norman Wade, "To Sister," December 29, 1861, "Letters of Norman Wade," 130 - 131.

Yorktown."¹²⁶ Sometimes the news was not good. Henry Wideman informed his brother that "David Boyer died at Chattanooga Hospital of typhoid fever on the 21st of June." He was happy to report that "Henry Fockler John Patterson William Johnson the Papists & all the other boys are well."¹²⁷ Many regiments contained numerous BNAs. One fellow wrote that all but three or four of the men in his company were Canadians.¹²⁸ At times, the actions of one BNA could make life more difficult for the others, as Charles Riggins discovered.

John Jones joined here [a camp near Buffalo] the other day, & then left -- if you see him over there [in Canada] tell him he had not better come to this side of the [Niagara] river again. -- if you see him, let me know. I dont think I can come over now [to Canada on leave] because Jones deserted.¹²⁹

Francis Moses Wafer, assistant surgeon for a New York regiment, attended to two Canadians after the Battle of Gettysburg: Lieutenant Evans of Toronto, and Lieutenant McDonald of Kingston.¹³⁰ Two brothers from Burgessville, Canada West, also fought at Gettysburg -- on opposing sides. Both died "and are said to be buried quite close to each other."¹³¹ The navy, too, saw many BNA enlistments. Norman Wade wrote: "I have a friend on board that

¹²⁶ John Stuart, "To Brother," May 4, 1862, Chatham Weekly Planet, May 22, 1862.

¹²⁷ Henry Wideman, "To Brother," July 15, 1864.

¹²⁸ Captain W. H. Clipperton, "To Friend Stevenson," July 22, 1863.

¹²⁹ Charles Riggins, "To Brother," March 2, 1862.

¹³⁰ H. P. Gundy, ed., "A Kingston Surgeon in the American Civil War," Historic Kingston 7 (1957 - 1958): 48.

¹³¹ Donald Orth, "To Author," August 22, 1992.

belongs there [to Newfoundland], and a fine young fellow he is. There are several young men that belong to the Provinces on board here."¹³²

BNAs, like most Civil War soldiers, supplied descriptions of the heroic part they played in battle. Cyrille Fountain confided to his diary a close encounter he had experienced. On May 12, 1864 he wrote: "our Division went to reinforce the 2 Corps boys. we lost heavy here...I had my hat cut of from my head by a Shell it knock me down but did not hurt me much. my frying pan Saved my life." ¹³³ Norman Wade had the distinction of firing on other Nova Scotians thought to be running the Union blockade.

A schooner was seen working in towards the mouth of the river...the Captain told me to pitch a shot across her course...she came too...and she proved to be a schooner from Lunenburg, Nova Scotia...some of the officers had the joke on me for firing at my own countrymen.¹³⁴

Concern over US - British entanglements naturally bothered some BNAs. Ironically, BNAs patrolled the US - British North American frontier to guard against incursions from the provinces.¹³⁵ Understandably, many BNAs did not wish to fight against their native land. During the Trent Affair, Newton Wolverton was "appointed spokesman by a committee of Canadians to approach President [Lincoln] to tell him that they had not enlisted to fight

¹³² Norman Wade, "To Sister," December 29, 1861, "Letters of Norman Wade," 130 - 131, 140.

¹³³ Cyrille Fountain Diary, May 12, 1864, 291.

¹³⁴ Norman Wade, "To Father," November 26, 1861, "Letters of Norman Wade," 128 - 129.

¹³⁵ Several in my sample were listed as stationed along the frontier.

against their Mother Country."¹³⁶ American - British relations troubled Richard Rushton of Haldimand, Canada West, as well. He wrote to his sister "that should the worst happen he must find some way to escape the necessity of taking up arms against his native country."¹³⁷ Henry Jackson saw a means by which Canada could avoid a war with the USA. He thought Canada should rid itself of the British garrison.

I think it is well for Canada that they are increasing their volunteer militia, if British soldiers are not a weakness to Canada then I am mistaken. In the event of a war between Britian & the United States any force Britian can plant in Canada will be a weakness to Canada itself, because the Americans cannot be united in a war against Canada itself while Britian had her soldiers in Canada it would reverse the case altogether.¹³⁸

Not all BNAs were entirely supportive of the Mother Country. Norman Wade could not understand why Nova Scotians were sympathetic to the South, "considering the relation we bear the northern people," and thought that England had better not attempt to raise the naval blockade. "If they do I shall always regard her as an ambitious, usurping power." However, he hoped the two powers would not come to blows over the Trent

¹³⁶ Lois Darroch Milani, "Four Went to the Civil War," Ontario History 51.4 (1959): 266.

¹³⁷ Richard Rushton, "To Sister," date unknown, 'Death Notice,' Haldimand Advocate, April 30, 1914. Clipping supplied by the Haldimand Norfolk Regional Museum.

¹³⁸ Henry Jackson, "To Aunt and Uncle," August 25, 1863.

Affair, "for if a war should break out between these two Countries there is no telling where it would end, as it is bad enough now."¹³⁹

BNAs rarely mentioned blacks or slavery in their letters home. The contrast between master and slave though, was not easily missed. Robert Scott commented on this in a letter to his father.

Every little distance to the right or left you see beautiful mansions, with the yard finely set off with shade trees, while in the porch or in an arbor you would see from 2 to 6 ladies at their ease, while their darkies were busy doing the work.¹⁴⁰

Henry Wideman thought the "contraband [negro] cooks in the army...are generally quite intelligent. I have talked with a number of slaves and all appear to be used well in these parts, but say that further South they have hard times."¹⁴¹ Patrick O'Kane, as we previously saw, displayed no love for the slave, wishing the war had not changed into one of emancipation for the "Niger."¹⁴²

Several BNAs tried to imitate the slave dialect for folks back home.

Some of the black women were plowing with mules. They enquired if we were de Lincoln soldiers? Upon our answering in the affirmative, they jumped about with joy exclaiming 'I's free, I's free, bress de Lor, Massa not lash me any more.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Norman Wade, "To Sister," December 29, 1861; "To Unknown," January 1, 1862; "To Brother," March 5, 1862, "Letters of Norman Wade," 130 - 135.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Scott, "To Walter Scott," October 11, 1862.

¹⁴¹ Henry Wideman, "To Brother," June 13, 1862.

¹⁴² Patrick O'Kane, "To Mary," December 28, 1862.

¹⁴³ Solomon McColl, "To Brother," May 4, 1865.

J. G. Atwood of Galt, Canada West "could relate for hours...these negroes' tales and experiences...many of them would grace a comic almanac." He related an entire story in what he considered negro idiom. In part it went:

But I tell you, de iron you Yankees make de balls ob be berry rotten, for when dey come ober dey break to pieces, and fly in ebery direction, and when dey bust, dey make a great noise, and de pieces fly all ober, and massa get skaird and run like de debil.¹⁴⁴

The use of black troops drew little comment. Cyrille Fountain though, was curious and wanted to go "See the Nigger troops but did not See them." On another occasion he wrote how the "Rebels [charged] on our niggers but they got handsomely whipt by them."¹⁴⁵ Henry Wideman told how on one occasion the rebels attacked their lines in belief that the Union troops were black soldiers.

Prisoners taken say their officers told them that we were Negroes and 100 day men & would not stand a charge & therefore could easily be whipped & the reason they charged on us so often was because they did not like to be whipped by niggers.¹⁴⁶

An unknown number of BNAs were prisoners of war. At least one BNA, teamster J. Johnson, died at Andersonville prison.¹⁴⁷ Others wrote of their experience. One fellow, writing from Prison in Alabama, reported that he still had good health, "but it is very hard to be confined with over 200 men

¹⁴⁴ J. G. Atwood, "To Brother," March 31, 1862, Galt Reporter, April 18, 1862: 2. Clipping supplied by the Kitchener Public Library.

¹⁴⁵ Cyrille Fountain Diary, May 1, 1864 and June 24, 1864, 289, 298.

¹⁴⁶ Henry Wideman, "To Brother," May 31, 1864.

¹⁴⁷ Moxley and Brooks, "Drums Across the Border," 59.

in a small place, and fed with provisions unfit for dogs to eat."¹⁴⁸ Hunger drove many prisoners "to a state of frenzy."¹⁴⁹

Peter Weaver described to his sister his prison ordeal.

We have been seeing such hard times since we was captured...we was starved and marched through the rain...they gave us corn meal...to mix...up with cold water and a little salt and then bake it till it is as dry as a chip and there is no more substance than a sock... [We had] to march all day...and ford crick up to the neck and at night lay down in the mud and rain without enny covering or dry cloths. My cloths was wet for 10 day...I spent my Christmas on the cars [the railroad].¹⁵⁰

Weaver survived being a prisoner of war, only to be killed at war's end when the boiler on board the steamer Sultana, a river-boat on which he was returning north, exploded. The blast killed about 600 Union soldiers.¹⁵¹

The letters, taken as a whole, reveal several interesting BNA qualities, and war-time experiences. For many, Canada was not far from their thoughts; and although their letters do not indicate they were clannish, BNAs did know when other BNAs were around. What the letters also reveal is a readiness and a quickness by BNAs to adopt the American cause, and the degree to which BNAs were Americanized. Letters written with the pronoun 'I' often changed over the course of the correspondence into 'we'. Generals were traitors to 'my country' and 'our government.' Interestingly, BNAs who

148 Andrew Geddes, "To Parents," May 22, 1862.

149 Edgar Andrew Collard, "Being PoW a Terrifying Experience," Gazette, February 16, 1991.

150 Peter Weaver, "To Sister," date unknown, Willis Weaver family papers.

151 Patricia Faust, ed., "Sultana Disaster," Historical Times Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Civil War, (New York: Harper and Row, 1986) 731 - 732.

crossed the border to enlist, such as Charles Riggins and Augustus Sorg, viewed, or came to view, Confederate soldiers as rebels, not as Confederates or Southerners; it was as if the American rebellion was a personal problem confronting them. Many BNAs were clearly proud of the part they played in the war, even if they desperately wanted out of the army. Yet, the lack of support from home must have made their life in the Union army somewhat uncomfortable. Norman Wade was not only fighting rebels, but was doing so knowing that his fellow Nova Scotians, and even his brother, were hoping his side would lose. Augustus Sorg also realized that many people in Canada were not on the Union's side, and this must have made life in the American army, at least on occasion, difficult. "I suppose the people in Canada," he wrote, "would like very well to see the South get their independence but then they never will yet. The United States isn't going to keep this war up for five years and then give up to the South."¹⁵² Believing the provinces were against the Union, it would be interesting to learn whether BNAs willingly admitted their nativity to American comrades. However, none of the BNAs complained of discrimination at the hands of native Americans. Any comments made were in the other direction: praising the United States for treating them so well.

¹⁵² Augustus Sorg, "To Jacob," September 31, 1864.

EPILOGUE

BNAs have been misunderstood. Historians have either overlooked the role they played during the war, or have focused on the illegal, sensational and extraordinary aspects of BNA contributions. Most of the available writings conclude that BNAs were either forced into the army at gun point, kidnapped while they slept, drugged and enroled while unconscious, or were mercenaries, substitutes, draft dodgers, deserters or bounty jumpers. Meanwhile, studies have excluded common BNAs. Forgotten are the thousands who volunteered for noble sentiments, the twenty-nine who received the Medal of Honor, and the several who became Union generals. This paper though, by drawing attention to ordinary BNAs, re-interprets the BNAs' Civil War role, and demonstrates that the majority were neither the dupes of designing bounty brokers, nor unprincipled hired guns.

To better understand BNAs we need to place them into historical context. Thousands of people emigrated from the provinces during the 1850s and 1860s, and most did so for economic reasons. Population pressures, land scarcity, soil depletion, and loss of traditional industries all contributed to colonial economic uncertainty. Also, farmers, by consolidating and mechanizing their holdings, drove farm labourers from the fields, and made their services redundant. The dislocated populace headed for the urban centres, which in turn helped fuel provincial mid-century urbanization and industrial development. However, the new industries could not absorb the

ever growing labour glut, and this forced a further exodus of the unemployed.¹ BNAs then abandoned the provinces in favour of the United States, where land was still available in the West, and where opportunity still existed in American industrial centres. Thus began a migration that would last forty years. It was from this pool of new Americans that the Union army drew most of its BNAs. By 1861, many BNAs had, to varying degrees, been assimilated into American society. When the war broke out resident BNAs, especially those who had voted in an American election, became early and enthusiastic supporters, and enlisted for reasons analogous to their American neighbours and friends.

The migration of colonials continued during the Civil War, but those who arrived in the 1860s did not possess the strong bonds of loyalty displayed by the earlier, and now older migrants. In a sense, the new arrivals were not much different from those BNAs long settled in the US; both had fled the colonies to better their economic condition.² The difference was one of

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- ¹ J. M. S. Careless, The Rise of Cities in Canada Before 1914, The Canadian Historical Association Booklet No. 32 (Ottawa: Love Printing Service Ltd., 1978) 18; John Isbister, "Agriculture, Balanced Growth, and Social Change in Central Canada since 1850: An Interpretation," Economic Development and Cultural Change 25.4 (July 1977): 685 - 686; David Gagan, "The Indivisibility of Land: A Microanalysis of the System of Inheritance in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," The Journal of Economic History 36.1 (March 1976): 126-140; Richard Pomfret, "The Mechanization of Reaping in Nineteenth-Century Ontario: A Case Study of the Pace and Causes of the Diffusion of Embodied Technical Change," The Journal of Economic History 36.2 (June 1976): 399-415; Leo A. Johnson, History of the County of Ontario 1615 - 1875 (Whitby, Ontario: The Corporation of the County of Ontario, 1973) 196-197, 208-211; Marr and Paterson, Canada: An Economic History (Gage Publishing Limited, 1980) 185-186.
- ² R. K. Vedder and L. E. Gallaway, "Settlement Patterns of Canadian Emigrants to the United States, 1850-1960," The Canadian Journal of Economics 3.3 (August 1970): 486. They describe Canadian migrants as economic maximisers.

timing: earlier arrivals had more time to assimilate. The recent arrivals naturally did not feel obliged to serve in the Union army -- it was not their war. Many, to satisfy their economic ambitions, entered American industry; others saw the enlistment bounty as a faster means to wealth, and enlisted for personal gain.

When the war ended most BNAs likely remained in the United States, although many did return to the British provinces. The 1883 List of Pensioners on the Roll shows that the American government was sending 615 Civil War pensions to disabled veterans, or to their families in Canada. Of course, not all the pensioners listed would have been Canadian-born, some were probably American-born immigrants. As well, not all veterans received pensions, so the number of BNAs returning to the provinces was likely much higher.³ According to Thomas Raddall, author of Halifax, Warden of the North, almost every Nova Scotian town and village contained 'crippled veterans.' Raddall, unfortunately, did not cite a source for his statement.⁴

How well BNAs fit into society upon their return is difficult to determine. Most probably tried to return to the life they knew beforehand, although

some [Ontarians] in the 1870s believed that tramps were men who had learned the habits of drifting during the American Civil War and never returned to a settled life, but almost all 'reputable' people tended to blame the phenomenon [the

³ List of Pensioners on the Roll January 1, 1883 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883) 617 - 626.

⁴ Thomas Raddall, Halifax, Warden of the North (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965) 197.

increasing number of vagrants] on individual bad character.⁵

Several men mentioned in this paper went into medicine: Francis Wafer returned to his medical studies at Queen's, and after graduation practiced medicine until his death at age 45; Charles Riggins apparently became a druggist. Other than Arthur Rankin, the MPP from Canada West who attempted to raise a regiment of lancers, no BNAs were charged with violating the Foreign Enlistment Act. In Rankin's case, the British government charged him with the crime of raising troops in Canada, not for being a Union soldier, and in the end, all charges were dropped.

Letting go of the war was not easy for many. The Grand Army of the Republic, a veterans organization for Civil War soldiers begun in the States, opened at least one branch in Canada, at Hamilton, Ontario -- the William Winer Cooke Post, named in memory of the most famous Hamiltonian to serve with the Union forces. Shortly after the war Cooke re-enlisted in the regular American army and became a Lieutenant Colonel in the Seventh Cavalry. He was a close friend of Colonel George Armstrong Custer, and was with Custer at the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. Both, of course, died in battle. Four other Canadians also died. Cooke has the distinction of being the last man of that ill-fated troop ever heard from. During the battle he sent a note requesting reinforcements, which came too late to be of any service. He also has the distinction of having been scalped twice: once in the usual manner, and once to remove his long and very full sideburns. In any event,

⁵ Richard Anderson, "The Irrepressible Stampede: Tramps in Ontario, 1870 - 1880," Ontario History 84.1 (March 1992): 34. Carl Fish in "Back to Peace in 1865," American Historical Review 24 (Oct. 1918 to July 1919): 441, concludes that returning troops did not become anti-social, lawless, or militant. Rather, most settled down as best they could.

the Hamilton post of the Grand Army of the Republic had over 100 members at its peak. Every Memorial Day the members would gather together and hold remembrance services for those men buried in the Hamilton area who died "defending the Union." Fifty members attended the 1892 services, and placed flowers on 21 graves. By 1926 only four men survived to hold the memorial, while the number of graves to honour had increased to about 80.⁶

There is more to the BNA story though, than what I have outlined in this paper. For instance, the focus to date has been on BNAs who enlisted. However, many thousands of BNAs who resided in the United States in 1861 did not volunteer. Why? An analysis of the non-volunteers might prove revealing, and tell us more about BNAs than a study of those who did enlist. Were the non-volunteers recent arrivals; if so how recent? Were most of the non-volunteers aliens, or had most been naturalized? Were the non-volunteers Democrats and therefore anti-Lincoln? What were the economic circumstances facing those who did not enlist? Perhaps it was only the less wealthy BNAs who enlisted. Did BNAs commute their service or dodge the draft more often than the average? Were BNAs under-represented in the Union's ranks? Questions regarding the non-volunteers are almost endless.

Those who did enlist also warrant further study. Who, for example, were the 'unknowns' so often seen in the charts of Chapter One? Were they from Canada? If so, the percentage of BNAs crossing over the border should be revised upwards. Also, out of necessity this study viewed BNAs in isolation, and made few comparisons to other national groups. How did BNAs compare to German-Americans, Irish-Americans and native sons?

⁶ Hamilton Spectator, May 31, 1892; August 9, 1892; May 27, 1926. Newspaper clippings were supplied to the author by the Hamilton Public Library, Hamilton, Ontario.

Such comparisons would put BNAs in a clearer perspective, and allow further judgements to be made.

As previously stated, this paper may not adequately reflect French Canadian and Maritime enlistments. These people require further study to complete our coverage of the Civil War contributions made by BNAs. Publications focusing on the French Canadian effort are woefully inadequate. In fact, none were found. There are though, some works that target the impact of the Civil War on New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, but they tend to focus on political and economic considerations.⁷ Although Thomas Raddall, in Halifax, Warden of the North, wrote that in 1861 there was "a rush of young [Nova Scotian] adventurers to join the Union army," and that so many Nova Scotians joined one Boston regiment that it was dubbed the 'Highland' regiment.⁸ But Raddall undertook no detailed investigation. Daniel Johnson, a certified genealogist in New Brunswick, is currently studying Maritimers who served in Maine regiments. Johnson has found that at least 1,929 New Brunswickians, 612 Nova Scotians, 81 Prince Edward Islanders, and 30 Newfoundlanders enrolled in Maine.⁹ I discovered 80 to 100 Nova Scotians (most of whom originally came from Halifax) who served in Massachusetts regiments.

Regimental studies would be beneficial. Did BNAs congregate into certain regiments, as Raddall suggests? There were, after all, Irish and German regiments, was there also a British North American regiment; or

⁷ See for example, Gertrude Gunn's, "New Brunswick Opinion on the American Civil War." Master's Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1956; and Harry Overholtzer's, "Nova Scotia and the United States' Civil War." Master's Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1965.

⁸ Raddall, Halifax 193, 196 - 197. He also estimates that 10,000 Nova Scotians may have served, but again, no sources were cited by Raddall.

⁹ Daniel F. Johnson, "To Author," June 10, 1992.

was Rankin's Lancers the closest the BNAs ever got to having their own unit? As well, through regimental studies, the BNAs' combat contributions could be analyzed, and their battlefield reactions studied. Did BNAs desert more often than Americans? Were BNAs discriminated against at promotion time? That is, if 50,000 BNAs served, did they possess their fair share of line officers? One historian believes foreigners, including BNAs, did suffer such discrimination.¹⁰ Were BNAs singled out for harder punishments, or given less appealing work assignments? Further, what was the opinion of American soldiers towards BNAs? A study of several regiments might provide answers.

Other areas to research include the enlistment of black BNAs. This study did not separate black from white recruits, although a number of black BNAs did serve once President Lincoln authorized the raising of black troops. Thirteen black BNAs enlisted in the seven counties studied. Most volunteered in, or after September 1864, although James L. Hagerman was on board the Paul Jones as early as October 1862. All likely received a handsome bounty; in fact, the records list six as having received \$800 from the county in which they enrolled. Eleven were born in Canada, and two in New Brunswick. Other statistics are lacking, as most of the remaining portions of their service records are, unfortunately, blank.

A study focusing on the families of BNAs would be fascinating. What was their perspective on the war? Were they pleased their sons, brothers and fathers were in the American army? Many parents, at least those whose sons had crossed the border to enlist, were not overjoyed -- if the governor general's records are any indication. But then, the governor general's records

¹⁰ Kevin Weddle, "Ethnic Discrimination in Minnesota Volunteer Regiments During the Civil War," Civil War History 35.3 (1989): 251.

are not necessarily representative; as those who were proud did not write to the government informing them of the good news. Most of those who wrote to the governor general were trying to secure the discharge of under-aged BNAs who had enlisted without consent.

Nor does this study discuss famous BNAs. There were, however, several BNA generals and, as mentioned earlier, there were twenty-nine BNAs who received the Medal of Honor. More could be said about their accomplishments. Evidence also exists to prove that the man who killed J.E.B. Stuart, the famous Confederate cavalry commander, was a BNA.¹¹ There was also at least one female BNA serving in the ranks. Sarah Edmonds was born in New Brunswick, but left for the United States in 1856. In 1861, disguised as a man and calling herself Franklin Thompson, she enlisted. On several occasions Edmonds "disguised" herself as a woman and crossed rebel lines as a Union spy. At one point she contracted malaria and required hospitalization. To avoid detection she deserted. After the war Edmonds sought to correct this blotch on her -- or rather, Franklin Thompson's -- army record, and petitioned Congress. She also petitioned Congress for an army pension, which she eventually received.¹² There were many rumours of females joining the army. The Chatham Weekly Planet wrote, in a joking manner, that "Females... discovered in the disguise [of soldiers] are said to be good fighters. But, [the article continued,] women who wear the breeches

11 Moxley and Brooks, "Drums Across the Border" 59.

12 Information on Edmonds was taken from an article written by Amy H. Berger, "Sarah: The Woman Who Fought in the Civil War as a Man," supplied to the author by the Carleton County Historical Society, New Brunswick. See also S. Emma Edmonds, "A Female Spy Changes Her Color," Secret Missions of the Civil War, Philip Van Doren Stern, ed. (1959; New York: Bonanza Books, 1990) 121 - 122.

always were.”¹³ The St. Johns News and Frontier Advocate also reported a story about a female soldier, albeit one hailing from Scotland who was, therefore, not a BNA. Anyway, it seems this unnamed Union soldier, whose family had settled in London, Canada West, became drunk, and landed in jail. The guards thought the soldier had died and opened up the shirt of “the apparently inanimate form to see if there was any appearance of life, the reader can judge of the [guard’s] astonishment on finding that it was -- a woman.”¹⁴

Future studies dealing with BNAs can go in at least two directions: focus can be made on BNAs as soldiers in Uncle Sam’s army, and/or attention can be given to BNAs as immigrants. Studies dealing with BNAs as soldiers would, of course, lean more towards being a military inquiry: examining their combat performance, desertion rates, death rates, battle related injuries, executions, promotions, and so forth, and comparing the results to other ethnic groups. Examinations focusing on BNAs as immigrants would emphasize their personal and private lives to learn more about them as a people. This could be accomplished by determining and studying their levels of income, occupations, why they migrated, from where in the provinces they came, whether they were naturalized Americans, and so on. Such an investigation would not only tell us about BNAs as a social group within the Union army, it would also shed additional light on the great nineteenth century British North American migration. In either case, the truth about BNAs, and their Civil War contributions and experiences would be better understood.

¹³ Chatham Weekly Planet, October 29, 1863.

¹⁴ St. Johns News and Frontier Advocate, Canada East, May 5, 1862.

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