

Battalion Artillery Enrollment and Orderly Book

Special Collections Belfast Free Library Belfast, ME

Summary Information:

Collection Title: Battalion Artillery Enrollment and Orderly Book
Collector:
Date of Collection: 1819-1837
Box Number: B1

Administrative Information:

Accession Number: 99.01.B1
Provenance:
Processor: Terry Cole/Tom Bamford
Date Processed: Nov. 1999
Restrictions: No Restrictions

Biographical/Historical Information:

The first entries predate the title page. They commence in October 1819 with an order from Battalion Headquarters, Bangor, for the Belfast Company to assemble at the Gun-House, Belfast, for the purpose of choosing a new captain. The procedure and historical context are interesting.

The incoming Captain would be elected by popular vote by the Citizen Soldiers, while the event occurred only four and a half years after the British forces had left Castine and five months before Maine ended its long struggle for statehood.

President James Madison had affected federal control of the Maine Militia when Massachusetts reneged on financing the defense of Maine's coast and its border with Canada. Major General William King (later Governor King) was commissioned Commanding Officer, and based in Portland.

An entry in the order book for June 20th, 1820 is a General Order from William King calling upon the militia to assume its responsibilities as "our main pillar of security on all sudden emergencies."

The orders and enrollment listings are replete with the names of Mainers who served. However, not all service was considered honorable as indicated by the number of courts martial around the state for cases of neglect of duty and

unofficerlike and ungentlemanlike conduct. The venues for these hearings were either the Castine Court House or local taverns.

There were many parades at the Gun-House and newly elected Captain Benjamin Hazeltine called for a full muster May 2nd, 1820. Forty-one attended, fourteen were absent. In addition to company parades there were parades for the whole Brigade, which were held over a period of days, each unit being inspected locally. Captain Benjamin Hazeltine's last parade was recorded by his brother, Sergeant Paul R. Hazeltine, Clerk, on October 4th, 1822.

The Hazeltine brothers (six of them moved to Maine, four coming to Belfast) feature throughout the sixteen years of records. Paul went on to become Battalion Major but will be best remembered as the first benefactor of the Belfast Free Library.

To more fully appreciate the value of the Belfast Corps of Artillery, beyond the Gun-House and official parades, refer to Crosby's Annals of Belfast, Chapter VI and Williamson's History of Belfast, Volume 1. There are numerous references to the Gun-House and Captain Ephraim McFarland, on whose property the Gun-House was situated; also references to local ceremonial occasions and celebrations when the battery was called on to provide "the roaring of cannon."

In the rear of the book and dated May 3rd, 1836 are written the "Bye Laws of Belfast Artillery. Article 6 institutes a schedule of fines for missing parades and for appearing without uniform and there is a register of the fines collected. Forty-six subscribers are attached to the by-laws including the addition two Hazeltine brothers, Mayo and Prescott.

The Gun-House

The date line "Gun House" appears so many times it begs for additional research. A thumbnail sketch of a building at the back of the Order Book may have been done as a record: it shows two large windows on the side, a large door with half-moon light above flanked by smaller windows at the end of the building; the roof is pitched. In Williamson, Volume 1, page 209, is a sketch map of early Belfast showing the McFarland property but it does not identify the Gun-House. McFarland came to Belfast in 1797 and built his house in 1799, the Gun-House being built 4 years later.

The site is at the junction of Church and High Streets at Northport Avenue, now occupied by the so-called James Patterson White house, built in 1840, on part of lot 39 of the first division of lots mapped by Joseph Chadwick, 1768.

Also sketched on the order book is a decorative piece such as an epaulet or plume. This appears with the sketch of the building on page 128 of the photocopies of the original archive. A description of the uniforms of the artillerymen was given to Williamson by an early settler, William Quimby. Refer

to Volume 1, page 424. On page 126 is recorded a vote on the design of the uniforms May 2nd, 1837.

According to Williamson, the Gun-House was provided in 1803 by local and federal funding. It was removed in 1836 and the Artillery Company disbanded in 1842.

Scope and Contents:

List of enrollments, battalion and company orders, 1819-1837.