

IN MEMORIAM
PRIVATE ELBRIDGE B. PIPER
CO, K, MASSACHUSETTS 23RD INFANTRY

DIED OF DISEASE, 18 APRIL, 1862
AFTER THE BATTLES OF ROANOKE ISLAND AND
NEWBERN, NORTH CAROLINA

“A NOBLE SACRIFICE, WORTHY OF THE CAUSE...”

WALPOLE HISTORICAL COMMISSION



CIVIL WAR
SESQUICENTENNIAL

**Item From the *Walpole Star*
June 13, 1884**

Elbridge Brigham Piper

We this week give space to an article commemorative of one of the purest young patriots who, fired at the call of country, laid down their lives in its defense. The subject of this article was one of the first to spring to arms, and in his honor the Walpole Post of the Grand Army of the Republic was named. The sermon, from which the following extracts are taken, was preached at the Orthodox church in Walpole, by Rev. Mr. Healy, the Sons of Temperance conducting the funeral:

Extracts from a Funeral Address Delivered in Memory of Elbridge Brigham Piper, April 30, 1862.

“When the heart is bowed down under the weight of a crushing affliction, and it seems as if it would bleed its life away, it instinctively turns its eye to the word of inspiration and its thought to the infinite Father; and this universal fact of experience and observation is conclusive evidence of a personal and paternal God, and the divinity of the sacred scriptures, that precious Book to which the crushed and bleeding soul doth cling, as child to mother, must be the word of God.

*The soul reposing on this sure relief
Feels herself happy amidst all her griefs;
Forgets her labor as she toils along,
Weeps tears of joy, and bursts into song.*

Elbridge Brigham Piper was born July 20, 1843, and was consecrated to God in the ordinance of baptism at this date, Sept. 8, 1844. From earliest childhood he was the subject of religious instruction and earnest consecrating prayer. At an early period he entered the Sabbath school and was a constant attendant, so long as he remained at home. So constant was he that the last Sabbath of his sojourn among us found him with his class studying the sacred scriptures. Trained as he was in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and early and constantly trained to a love of virtue, his life at home and abroad, was one of moral purity and uprightness. The young with whom he mingled remember him as a noble-minded and open-hearted youth, never stooping to anything mean or unmanly, but ever inflexible in many purpose. Nor was his moral uprightness attributable to the restraints of home, although he loved home with an undying affection, and was ever inspired by a controlling filial fear; but the principals of virtue planted by paternal precept and example, took deep root in a congenial soil and bore perennial fruit. At home in the intercourse of social life, and amid the temptations of the camp and on the field of battle, but one report comes to us, and that is "He was a good boy, and was always willing to do his duty".

Naturally unselfish and possessed of a sanguine temperament, so soon as the sound of war was heard, he longed to serve his country in suppressing the rebellion, and when patriotic ardor was firing the young men of New England to lay themselves upon their country's altar, he caught the inspiration, and at once begged his parents to let him go to the field of deadly combat. He was young and needed parental care; his parents knew the temptations of a soldier's life and he was a hopeful and beloved son, and how could his friends endure the sacrifice and grant the request. But heroic and persistent in his purpose, he was not to be thwarted in his cherished undertaking. He pressed his wish again and again, and weary of his importunity and hoping he might be returned to their embrace, his parents reluctantly yielded, and on the 24th of Sept. 1861, he enlisted in the Volunteer Army of the Union. On the 4th of the following month he was mustered into service, and after a season of drill in camp, he left for the seat of war; remained some six weeks at Annapolis, then joined Burnside's expedition and sailed for Fortress Monroe. He was engaged in two fierce battles, that of Roanoke Island, which occurred Feb. 7th and 8th, and that of Newbern, March 14th in both of which he fought with single bravery. By severe hardships and unusual exposure during the first engagement, he contracted a violent cold; from this he partially rallied, but repeated exposure at the battle of Newbern, renewed his disease and compelled him to enter the hospital, where he remained some four weeks under the influence of a disease incident to that climate. But forced to leave the hospital sooner than he should to make room for others, and entering upon guard duty too early, his disease relapsed and he died of typhoid fever, April 18th at 3 o'clock in the morning. Of his last hours and the attending circumstances, his brother writes from Newbern, April 18th: "My dear brother is no more. He breathed his last at fifteen minutes past three o'clock yesterday morning, the 18th. I was with him all day and night before he died, and attended his every want. With that feeling of emotion I witnessed his gradual sinking. He was very restless and wandering. Poor boy, he was insensible of his condition. Sometimes he would make a rational answer, but seldom; still he knew me all the time and would call me by name. What would I have given if I could have saved his life! He wanted to go home and he evidently thought he was on his way home, for once he thought he was at Plimpton's, and wanted to know how he was going to get up from the depot. His mind seemed to be upon home, and he mentioned his "dear father" and others of his family.

Towards night I began to have more hopes of him, for he looked brighter and his pulse was full and strong. I was in hopes the change would be in his favor, but alas! His time had come. About half past eight he repeated the "Lords Prayer", and "Now I lay me down to sleep" just as he used to when he was a little boy. It was an affecting scene. He continued restless until 11 o'clock, when there was a change for the worst. He was struck with death; he was very quiet from that time but insensible; he remained thus until he breathed his last at quarter past three, when he died easily without a gasp. I could hardly realize that he was dead, but it begins to be a reality now. Oh, how I shall miss him. I wish I could accompany him home but that is out of the question. God grant that his remains may arrive safely, to be laid beside little Josephine. It is hard to die away from home and friends, but "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform." I trust Brigham is in heaven. He was a good boy and always willing to do his duty. I have asked God to prepare you to receive the sorrowful tidings with composure and trust. God has taken him to himself."

My dear brother and sister, what consolation is breathed in this most affectionate letter of condolence. How like the spirit of a trustful disciple "His time had come". This deeply affecting event that lacerates your hearts and provokes the bitter tears, was no accident. Though a sad and dark dispensation, yet it was a part of that great plan of His "who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." No fatality was culminated in this sad hour, but the death of your son came to pass, when, where, and how the deliberate pre-arrangement of the Infinite designed, and was the sequence of causes as uniform and harmonious as the return of the seasons, the fruition of autumn and the revolutions of the spheres. He whose remains now lie before us, died in the service of his country in an unexpected moment, and at a distance from the amenities of home, however the time and manner and the circumstances appointed had arrived. His days were determined; the number of his months was with God; He had appointed his bounds that he could not pass. This reflection is a strong hold of faith and rest to the Christian and enables him to say with the Master," The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

You have occasion for gratitude at this hour, for the mitigating circumstances of this afflictive event. The Father tempers the wind to the shorn lamb. How many peculiar mercies and memories cluster around this calamity to dissipate its darkness and subvert its crushing force. How precious the thoughts and how rich a legacy to the living is the reflection that the departed left behind him a stainless, moral character. In the innocency of childhood, you gave your son into the hands of a covenant keeping God; you have borne him for these many years, day after day in the arms of Christian trust, to the mercy seat. By precept and example you endeavored to train him up in Christian nature. Inspired by patriotic sacrifice, you granted his request and laid him upon your country's altar with the parting counsel and prayer, "My son, prepare for death, for it may be your fortune; prepare to meet your God," and you had the assurance that he would seek an interest in your Redeemer and his Savior. God demanded the sacrifice you proffered, and his life was given – not in mortal combat where the deadly fight would preclude the kindly offices of friendship, but in a comfortable asylum, blessed with the attendance of a skillful medical friend, and permitted to enjoy even to the last, the kind ministrations of an affectionate brother. It was indeed hard to die away from home, where no parental hand can smooth the dying pillow; but such amenities as those granted your son, were peculiarly home-like, and the lot of but few in martial life.

But above all should you be grateful for that assurance which comes from one who knew him well, "I trust Brigham is in Heaven," and for that trustful leaning upon the promises which enabled him to commend his spirit to God in prayer as he was wont to do when the shades of night were gathering about his youthful cot, and he entered the land of rest.

As every soldier's life is given for the public good, so every soldier's death is a public loss. This is the first pang created in the heart of this community, by the loss of its self-sacrificing sons. God has dealt with our soldiers and their families in great mercies, and we would render to Him devoutest gratitude. We are now feeling, as never before, the evils of relentless war. Sad havoc is being made with noblest lives. The purple wine press is being trodden by faithful ones, victory must be bought with price, and heroic martyrs must cheerfully give their best lives as ransom. Some of the best blood has been spilt, and some of the noblest lives sacrificed. Let us not be slow to remember those valiant men, for history will embalm them for future ages. While this home is made desolate, thousands of other homes and hearts send up their wailings. Across yon mountains, I can hear the widows wail and the orphans cry, and while today we mourn our own brave dead, and bear the living to the mercy seat and ask the Lord of Hosts to cover their heads in the hour of thick battle. Once more would we tender our heartfelt sympathy to his bereaved circle. We pity you today, and rejoice with you in the gift of this consecrated son. Our hearts well with emotion and the tears of sorrow flow as we behold for the last time on earth, that manly brow, calm and beautiful in death. We mourn indeed, but not without hope, for we trust that the spirit of the departed, Brigham's real self, has received the baptism of immortality."

*As bowed by sudden storms, the rose
Sinks on the garden's breast
Down to the grave our brother goes
In silence there to rest.*

*No more with us his tuneful voice
The hymn of praise shall swell;
No more his cheerful heart rejoice
When peals the Sabbath bell.*

*Yet if in yonder cloudless sphere
Amid a sinless throng
He utters in his Savior's ear,
The everlasting song,*

*No more we'll mourn the absent friend,
But lift the earnest prayer
And daily every effort bend
To rise and join him there.*

At meeting of Spring Brook Division Sons of Temperance, held May 8th, 1862, the following resolves were unanimously adopted:

Resolved: That the death of E. B. Piper, the Spring Brook Div. of Sons of Temperance lament the loss of a worthy brother, endeared to us by his devotion to the Sons of Temperance and by the illustrations of our principles in his daily life.

Resolved: That by his upright moral conduct and by the manly and generous qualities in his nature, he secured our sincere esteem and confidence.

Resolved: That we honor the patriotism that led him to consecrate his life to his country, and the bravery which he exhibited in the fiery trial of battle. That young as he was, he showed a just appreciation of the blessings of liberty and sacrificed himself in their defense.

Resolved: That we offer to his parents our sympathy in their deep affliction, and our assurance that we shall long and tenderly cherish the memory of our deceased brother.

Joshua Allen, R.S. of Spring Brook Division, No. 36, S. of T.
Walpole, May 8th, 1862.

The following article, "One of Many", was written by Miss Anna Allen of Walpole, who lived opposite Mr. Piper, and who at that time was a student at Holyoke Seminary, the article having special reference to her young friend.

One of Many

Dear brown-eyed, curly headed Brigham! Oh, how many such faces has this weary war hidden under the coffin lid! How many just such boys lives that we never dreamed would not go to many strength and perfection, have been cut off, and we grieving for them, and calling them unfinished, forget that God in his eternal counsel has ordained it all, that not one of them has died without his knowledge or before his time, and if their work here seemed only just begun, it may have been interrupted, to be finished in a better world.

The simple, uneventful story of Brigham's life and death is that of many another all over our bleeding land. He was just like all other boys – teasing, willful, provoking at times, but generous, noble and affectionate, rather more mindful perhaps, of his father's requests and comfort than most are, with an artistic taste and lover for everything beautiful in nature, and a passionate fondness for pets of every description. Aside from this there was nothing remarkable about him.

Brigham grew up in pleasant home scenes and employments, contented with his quiet life, and not troubling himself to wish for greater things, knowing and caring little about the strifes, ambition, and discontents of the great, unresting world – just a common boy, with all a boy's interests and pursuits, to whom the question, whether his snares were sprung, was vastly more interesting than whether Italy would free herself from tyrant Austria.

When the war commenced, a change came over him. From being happy and contented, he grew absent-minded and restless. He wanted to go! The mention of dangers and hardships only seemed to determine him more fully to run the risk of encountering them, and at last his parents were forced to give a tearful and reluctant consent. They loved their country, but was it strange that it was like the bitterness of death to them to give up their son, this pleasant boy, upon whom they had even then begun to lean? – Give him up perhaps never to return – perhaps to come back a hopeless cripple – perhaps with an incurable disease fastened upon his body – perhaps with polluting sin, that worst of diseases, upon his soul.

He went to camp. There are many hearts that have ached that first day out just as his mother's did. But there was some hope: he was not yet pledged, - perhaps he would even then retract. NO! The first letter came, "I was sworn in this morning." But oh! camp-life was so glorious, and there was a prospect of staying there indefinitely, and of numberless furloughs, and mother mustn't mourn his absence, for he shouldn't be gone long, six months at the longest, and he should be a good boy wherever he was to do his duty.

He came home several times. Very proud and happy he looked in his new soldier's suit. Very eloquent was he in praise of a soldier's life, and earnest to persuade his young companions to share it with him. The last furlough came and went, and he, the cherished home-boy was gone. No hope of seeing him again for many a long month, but instead, anxious waiting for letters, and trembling searchings of papers. Months passed along. He always wrote cheerfully, but mingled with the enthusiasm about the new scenes and places, came questions about "that grape vine" he had set out; and was the circle of evergreens he had planted doing well? And had father made that addition to the barn yet? When he came home there were various things he should do, and changes he should make; and he hoped he certainly should be home before long, for there was every prospect that the war would soon be over, and oh! wouldn't that be a HAPPY day! And shouldn't let them know he was coming, but should walk in some night, just as they were all setting down to tea, and surprise them.

He passed safely through two battles, at Roanoke Island and Newbern, and glowing letters told the story. The bullets whistled around his head, he said, but he was not in the least afraid. Indeed he never once thought of danger, but wasn't it strange he should have come out unharmed when so many fell all around him? He thought of mother and Sarah all the time, and was so glad they knew nothing about it, and now they needn't worry any more for about him, for he shouldn't be in another battle for a long time, as the regiment was to be stationed at Newbern, to guard the city, and now they would have a long time to rest, and MAY BE a short furlough. Prophetic words! There were indeed to be no more battles for him, either with outside foes, or with the sin and vexations and weariness of life! And the rest that was so delightful to the poor tired one, was to be eternal, for the furlough was from all earthly work and weariness forever.

The long silence which followed, so agonizing to the poor parents who had heard indirectly that he was sick and in the hospital, - was broken only by the black-edged letter that said he was dead; that he was coming home - that he would soon be there - but in his coffin!

Oh! they had never dreamed of this, that the meeting they had longed for and looked forward to so long, would be a silent one, with never a kiss, or a shake of the hand, or a welcoming word; that he would come among them and they not even to see his face.

They knew the dreadful fever was raging there; that hundreds had sickened and died, some even, whom they knew, but it never occurred to them that HE could die. They had looked forward to a long life of useful happiness for him, as he, with his young companions, should grow along into vigorous manhood. They never thought his active, earnest, healthful spirit would be the first to tire, and while others were going on, he, always, a boy, would be sleeping they years away, and nothing more of the work and joy and music of life for him.

It was hard to believe that it was Brigham come home – as they sat looking through the window and watched the coffin coming down the hill into the yard, and in through the same door he had gone out from; hard to realize it was his body wrapped in the flag-shroud, so unmindful of the crowd that gathered at his burial – and any one of whose faces, it would, only a little while ago, have given him so much joy to have looked upon.

The weeks dragged by wearily, and Saturday night came again, the fateful night that had brought desolation into that joyous household. In silence the stricken family sat together, and as twilight deepened into darkness, they found themselves listening for the returning footsteps of him who should come never more. Suddenly the door bell rang, and the express man brought in a box. “Came to New York by Adams Express; from your son probably.” They knew what it was at a glance. The father’s cheek blanched as he laid down his paper. The mother hastily left the room to find a place where she might weep alone. The sister’s tears fell fast as she bowed her own upon the baby’s sunny head. Even the little ten-year-old brother, leaving his unfinished kite, and with awestruck countenance the changed faces around, knew before he asked, “are Brigham’s things in it father?”.

Poor Brigham! How could they help thinking of that longer heavier box, which so short a time before was brought in at the same door, oh, so carefully, and opened with so many tears, for the coffin that was in it had that fair summer’s day had Brigham’s name and age upon it. Poor young Brigham! who had been laid away that fair summer’s day in his grave on the hill-side by the sister who went long ago. It was like opening that grave again to have that second box uncovered, and see its contents. Ah! these remembrances. How our hearts are wrung by them! Oh! happy, favored one, into whose life God has never sent a day in which to gather up, and weep over, and lay carefully by, all that belonged to a beloved one whose mortal has put on immortality. The box was opened! The first thing that met their gaze were the cap and the long blue overcoat which he had worn when they had watched him out of sight that last morning. How his mother wept, as in tenderly looking over the coat, her eyes fell on the pocket she had put in the last evening he was at home, when he sitting by her side, and directing how it should be done, assumed a cheerfulness which he did not feel, that he might comfort her. There were the clothes he had washed himself that very morning he was stricken down with the dread fever, and folded carefully together were some others with a paper pinned to them, upon which was written, “Perhaps his mother would like to know that he wore these when he died.” Oh, how plainly she could see that distant hospital. The room with its rows of beds, from which pale, haggard, suffering faces looked up – faces from which the anguish would never pass until death had made them paler; and in that motley company whom suffering had brought together, she saw her own innocent faced boy, with only strangers to wipe the dark damp from his cold brow – to catch his last delirious words – to close his eyes and prepare him for that last journey home. There was a little writing desk that he had taken away with him, containing all his letters he had received from home. They know now how precious these had been to him as they saw them worn and soiled with much reading, and sorrowfully they thought how like these letters had the love they had sent out after him come back into their own hearts again. There were letters also from other friends, and there was a gleam of comfort in seeing that there were so many of them. They were glad of very drop of happiness that had fallen into his brief life.

His paper and pens were there just as his hand had left them, and an unfinished letter and a pack of directing envelopes, sorrowful reminders of what might have been. There were his Bible and Prayer Book too; the Bible which had been given at Sabbath school, many years before, for learning the Catechism, and which he had always taken with him when he went from home. Precious Bible! it could never be put in its accustomed place again, and it must never be read by another – but laid tenderly away with the precious mementoes of the dead. And even while their tears were flowing, and their hearts aching for these relics that lay scattered around, they could not realize that he had indeed left them; that the joy and hope of their once happy home had passed away forever; that the strong staff which the farmer had hoped to lean upon in his declining years, was broken.

And this is only one of the numberless homes whose light had gone out in the darkness; this is only one of the thousands of mothers “to whom this earth no more, as it has been, may be” for the missing of one who went out but will never return. Brigham’s grave is only one of the thousands of new-made graves scattered all over this stricken land – and this is the price we are paying for our country’s redemption.

Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, July, 1863.

Transcribed from a typewritten copy, received from Mr. John Anderson, President, Walpole Historical Society, August, 2005, by Michael E. Amaral, Walpole, Massachusetts August 21, 2005

Private Piper grew up on East Street, Walpole, south of the area now bordered by East St. and Grasshopper Lane. He was part of the Burnside Expedition to Eastern North Carolina, taking part in the battles of Roanoke Island and New Berne, North Carolina. This offensive was part of General Winfield Scott’s *Anaconda Plan*, which aimed to close blockade running ports inside the Outer Banks. The successful amphibious operation was primarily carried out by New England troops under Brig. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside and assisted by the North Atlantic Blocking Squadron of the U.S. Navy, under Capt. Louis M. Goldsborough.

As a result of this operation, numerous newly-liberated African Americans flocked to the United States troops and sought their protection. Many of these African Americans became part of the United States Colored Troops who took part in the Union Victory in 1865.

His grave is located in the upper central hillside of Maple Grove Cemetery on Kendall Street, Walpole, Mass. Upon his gravestone is engraved “*A Noble Sacrifice, Worthy of The Cause*”.

The E.B. Piper Post 154, of the Grand Army of the Republic, the Union veterans organization, was formed in Walpole in honor of Elbridge Brigham Piper, Walpole’s first to die during the Civil War.

Michael E. Amaral, Chairman, Walpole Historical Commission

WALPOLE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

1861-1865



2011-2015

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