

# **Princeton in the Civil War – First Congregational Church**

**4pm 13 April 2025**

[https://fathom.video/share/Scg7zQr\\_8NKLvsixgXD9q3hSsEeSpuKR](https://fathom.video/share/Scg7zQr_8NKLvsixgXD9q3hSsEeSpuKR)

## **Meeting Purpose**

To present historical research on Princeton's involvement in the American Civil War, including local sentiment, recruitment efforts, and soldiers' experiences.

## **Key Takeaways**

- Princeton strongly opposed slavery and the Fugitive Slave Law, passing town resolutions condemning it in 1850
- 80+ Princeton men enlisted to fight for the Union, with the town consistently meeting recruitment quotas
- Princeton soldiers fought in major battles like Gettysburg and suffered significant casualties, especially from disease
- The town's Civil War memorials at Bagg Hall were recently restored, prompting deeper historical research

## **Topics**

### **Pre-War Anti-Slavery Sentiment**

- 1830-1840: Growing religious-based anti-slavery sentiment in Princeton
- 1850: Town passed strong resolution condemning Fugitive Slave Law, pledging to hide escaped slaves
- 1860 election: 160/198 Princeton voters supported abolitionist candidates Lincoln and Andrew

### **Recruitment and Enlistment**

- Initial enthusiasm in 1861, with 28 men volunteering
- Quota system implemented in 1862 as war dragged on
- Princeton consistently met/exceeded quotas throughout war
- Soldiers often assigned to same units (e.g. 25th, 53rd Massachusetts)

- Youngest enlistee was Joseph Estabrook, age 17, who died of typhoid before reaching battlefield

### **Princeton Soldiers' Experiences**

- Fought in major battles: Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, Wilderness
- High casualty rates, especially from disease (17 died from disease vs 8 killed in action)
- Notable soldiers:
  - Joseph M. Howe: Survived Gettysburg, promoted to color bearer, killed at Spotsylvania
  - Andrew Loker: Captured, died as POW in Charleston
  - Alfred Edwards: African-American cavalry soldier in 5th Massachusetts Cavalry

### **Post-War Remembrance**

- Veterans organized as Grand Army of the Republic Post 99 until ~1875
- Civil War memorials installed at Bagg Hall, recently restored in 2021-2022
- Restoration project sparked deeper historical research into individual soldiers

### **Next Steps**

- Continue research, hoping presentation will prompt community members to share additional information/artifacts
- Maintain restored memorials and consider ways to protect them long-term
- Use memorials and research to keep Civil War history relevant to current Princeton residents