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GERALDINE TIDD SCOTT

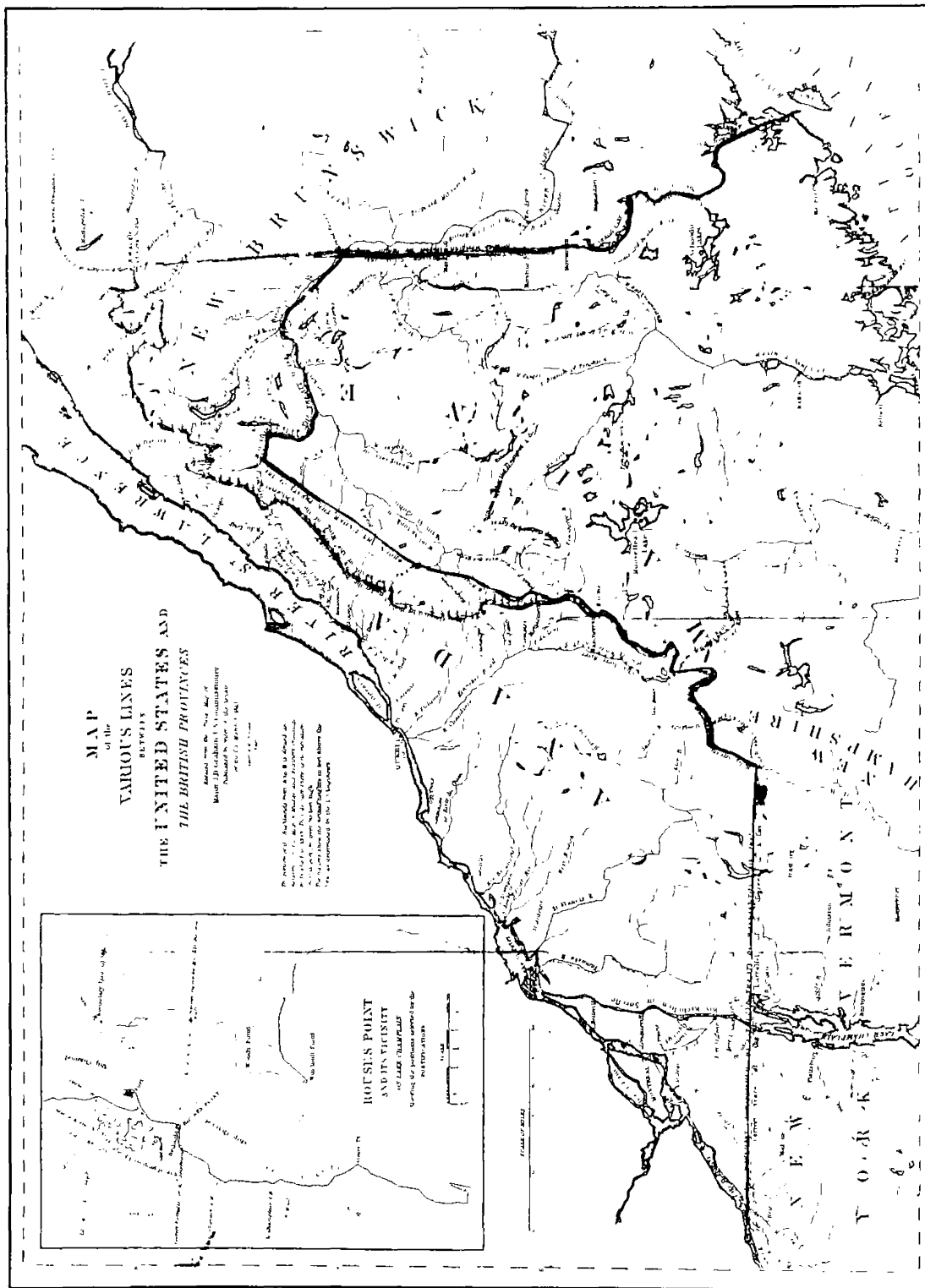
FORTIFICATIONS ON MAINE'S NORTHEAST
BOUNDARY, 1828-1845

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, tensions along Maine's northeastern border almost triggered a third war with Great Britain. Three concurrent expeditions — United States Army troops between 1828 and 1845; the Maine Land Agent's "civil posse" from 1834 to 1841; and two detachments of Maine Militia between February and May 1839 — raised a series of frontier forts. Their architectural styles and construction techniques demonstrate the ingenuity necessary to build a defense system along an extensive and isolated wilderness border.

In 1827, Governor Enoch Lincoln spoke of Maine's six million acres of largely unsettled disputed territory,¹ and expressed indignation concerning the dilatory process of negotiation between Great Britain and the United States. Of immediate concern was the great quantity of timber located upon the Aroostook River and its tributaries on lands granted to private owners and institutions, that was being cut and driven down the St. John River to British subjects who shipped it to England. Notwithstanding Maine's concern, he reminded the state's citizens that the adjustment and settlement of the boundary line was the appropriate business of the national government.²

The need for a definitely marked boundary was emphasized as early as 1817, when friction developed between New Brunswick authorities and newly arrived Maine citizens who settled on the St. John River just west of an Acadian community established in the 1780s. On July 4, 1827, John Baker and his neighbors, former southern Maine residents, celebrated Independence Day with a traditional flag-raising ceremony and a feast at their little colony west of Madawaska on the St.

This article is taken from the manuscript, *Ties of Common Blood, A History of Maine's Northeast Boundary Dispute with Great Britain, 1783-1842*, by Geraldine Tidd Scott.



British and provincial officials argued for a boundary running westward from Mars Hill and below the Allegash drainage; Americans claimed the land north of the St. John River. The "disputed territory" lay between the two interpretations of the Treaty of Paris (1783). Map from *Mr. Webster's Vindication* (1846).

John River. New Brunswick authorities considered the incident an affront to their jurisdiction and made plans for Baker's arrest. Carrying a petition for aid, Baker and James Bacon traveled by canoe to the seat of government at Portland. They arrived on September 1, 1827. Their petition explained that they suffered annoyance from the government of New Brunswick, and that their timber had been confiscated. Since they held titles to their lands from the Massachusetts and Maine land agents, they asked for protection of their civil rights, requested their own officers and magistrates, and expressed the desire to be represented in the councils of the State of Maine.³

On September 3, in response to this petition, Governor Lincoln informed Secretary of State Henry Clay that the British Government was exercising rights of administration and sovereignty in the disputed territory, in violation of prior agreement. Lincoln urged Clay to "look at the exciting cause of the cupidity of Great Britain and the anxiety of Maine in this profligate claim." He pointed out that the towns near the Bay of Fundy derived immense annual profits from shipbuilding, and that they looked with "unholy interest" and intent upon the extensive forests of Maine.⁴

On September 17, 1827, New Brunswick officials issued a warrant for the arrest of John Baker for trespass and intrusion on Crown lands. He was arrested on September 25 and held in jail until the middle of October, when court procedures began. Convicted, fined £250, and sentenced to six months in jail,⁵ Baker was also to be tried at Fredericton for exciting sedition among the French settlers at Madawaska and endeavoring to obstruct the passage of the British mail on the St. John River.⁶ When Lincoln began his second term as governor, Baker, having refused to pay bail or acknowledge the sovereignty of the Province of New Brunswick, was still in jail in Fredericton. In his inaugural address, Lincoln again expressed his confidence in the federal government, but asked the Maine legislature to recommend measures they deemed proper in situations such as the Baker arrest. The legislature urged the governor to use all proper and constitutional means to protect and defend its citizens. It called upon the president of the United States to take

immediate measures to effect Baker's early release from prison and to extend financial help to his family.⁷

On February 20, 1828, President John Quincy Adams, through Secretary of State Clay, addressed to Charles Vaughan, British envoy to Washington, a demand for the immediate liberation of John Baker and full indemnity for the injuries he had suffered.⁸ On March 22, the federal government demonstrated its support for Maine's claims by announcing that federal troops would be stationed at Houlton Plantation at the southeastern edge of the disputed territory. An appropriation of \$15,000 would be expended in making a military road from the Penobscot River to Houlton⁹

John Baker's trial on the second charge took place in May 1828 at Fredericton. He entered no defense, called no evidence, and declined the jurisdiction of the court. The jury returned a verdict of guilty. On May 12th, Baker received a two-month sentence and a fine of £25. At the end of the sentence, he refused to pay the fine and remained in jail. He was released on October 25, 1828.¹⁰

During Baker's internment in Fredericton, federal troops arrived at Houlton Plantation. Brevet Major N. S. Clark led the first Aroostook expedition with a unit of the Second United States Infantry from Madison Barracks, Sackett's Harbor, New York.¹¹ On June 27, 1828, the first of the four companies of his regiment arrived at Houlton Plantation and began building Hancock Barracks.

In July 1828 Clark reported sixty-eight men at Houlton.¹² The building of Hancock Barracks was in the style then favored by United States Army engineers in other areas of the nation: a quadrangle of quarters and offices surrounding a parade ground, the whole enclosed by a thick stockade. It was constructed upon a rise east of Houlton Village, on the north side of the Woodstock Road. The construction was difficult; ledge had to be blasted, hollows filled, and gravel hauled in to make the surface of the parade ground smooth. Soldiers cut and hewed trees, and, using their horses, brought them to the site



Maine's impatience with the stalled boundary negotiations, with rising timber theft, and with a number of clashes between Yankee settlers and provincial officials brought the boundary dispute to a head in 1839. Governor Kent (left) ordered a state survey of timber depredations in 1838. The resulting report, submitted to the legislature

and set them into the ground to form a stockade. A flagstaff stood at the entrance on the south side. Other soldiers, aided by as many local workmen as could be employed, built the officers' quarters on the east side of the quadrangle. Barracks for the troopers were constructed on two sides, and space was planned for the offices, hospital, storage of supplies, and for a powder magazine. So enormous was the task and so few workmen available that the quarters were not completed before snowfall, and many of the enlisted men spent the first Aroostook winter in army tents.¹³

While Company C was at work on Hancock Barracks, Captain Staniford and the three companies under his command were encamped at Beaver Brook, twenty-two miles south of Houlton. The 151 men of these three companies spent the summer building what would be variously known to local residents as the Beaver Brook Road, the Soldier Road, the Military Road, and eventually the Bangor Road. In a July 1828 report, Staniford noted the first casualty of the "war": Hiram T. Smith, Company F, had died on July 1.¹⁴

Staniford's troopers arrived at Hancock Barracks on September 29 from the Beaver Brook Road. The road, however, was not completed to Major Clark's satisfaction, and on December 7 he sent a detachment under the direction of Samuel Cook of Houlton to improve the route. Cook was authorized to survey

by his successor, John Fairfield (right), launched the civil excursion into the territory that triggered the "Aroostook War." Photos from Burrage, *Maine in the Northeastern Boundary Controversy*, 1919.



the road and instruct the troops in making winter roads in this section of the country. Clark informed Headquarters at New York that constructing an improved road was beyond the capabilities of his soldiers, who were better employed in completing and guarding the post at Houlton. He suggested that hired laborers be put to work to hasten the completion of the military road. Subsequent road building contracts were given to civilians.¹⁵

Timber depredations, border incidents, and clashes with New Brunswick officials continued through the 1830s. In 1838, because of jurisdictional problems, Governor Edward Kent pushed for a settlement. In 1839 Governor John Fairfield and the people of Maine, weary of the seemingly endless and fruitless negotiations, brought about a confrontation with Great Britain on state, national, and international levels.

It had been comforting to know that there was a token military force at Houlton, but its distance from the Aroostook River and the Madawaska settlements limited its function as a deterrent to trespassers.¹⁶ Governor Fairfield, on January 4, 1839, warned the legislature:

For myself, I am persuaded that such a state of things cannot much longer continue. A struggle of arms is but a poor arbiter of right between contending parties, ... but there is a point beyond which

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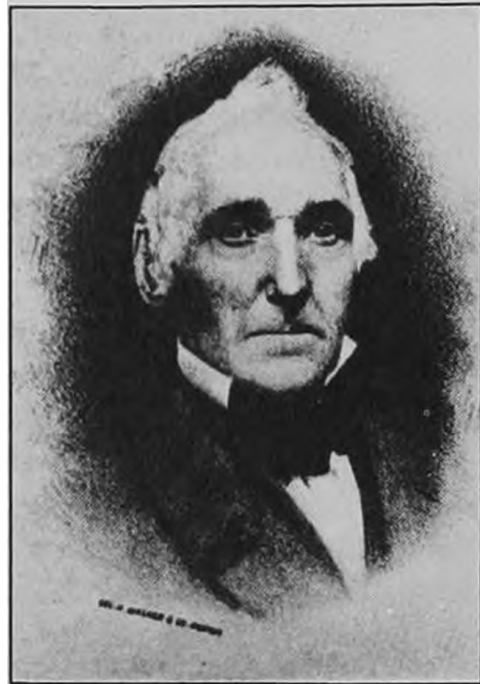
forbearance would be more than pusillanimity. ... If the general government, under no circumstances, should be disposed to take the lead in measures less pacific than those hitherto pursued, we are not remediless. If Maine should take possession of her territory, up to the line of the treaty of 1783, resolved to maintain it with all the force she is capable of exerting, any attempt on the part of the British government to wrest that possession from her must, constitutionally, bring the general government to her aid and defence ... This step, however, is only to be taken after mature deliberation.

Once taken, it can never be abandoned.¹⁷

In January 1839, surveyor George W. Buckmore reported extensive depredations on the public lands near the Aroostook River and surmised that energetic means would be required to arrest the trespassers; nothing short of an armed force of at least fifty men could effectively break them up.¹⁸ At a secret joint session of the state legislature on January 23, Governor Fairfield confided the contents of Buckmore's report and recommended quick, covert action.¹⁹ On January 24, the legislature approved a resolution authorizing the state land agent to "employ forthwith sufficient force to arrest, detain and imprison all persons found trespassing on the territory of this State ... " and appropriating \$10,000 to carry the resolve into effect.²⁰

Captain Rufus McIntire of Parsonsfield, who had commanded an artillery company at Plattsburg in the War of 1812, was Fairfield's newly appointed land agent.²¹ Under McIntire's leadership, the second Aroostook expedition, a civil posse of about two hundred men, made its way north to the valley of the Aroostook. As he was directing the arrest of trespassers on public lands and waiting for an appointment with New Brunswick's warden of the disputed territory, McIntire was carried into captivity by persons claiming to act under authority from the government of New Brunswick.²² The men had broken into arsenals and taken arms and ammunition, with the intention of resisting the Maine land agent's posse. Upon

Land Agent Rufus McIntire led a civil posse north to the Aroostook River in 1839. His capture by New Brunswick lumbermen provoked the second series of fortifications in the disputed territory, beginning with a temporary defense of logs, brush, and one small cannon at Masardis. Photo from *Historical Collections of Piscataquis County, Maine*, 1910.



receipt of information concerning McIntire's capture, Governor Fairfield appointed Charles Jarvis of Ellsworth as provisional land agent. The posse, now under his charge, was fortified at Township Number 10 (present-day Masardis), at the confluence of the Aroostook River and St. Croix Stream, waiting reinforcements.²³

On February 13 Lieutenant Governor John Harvey of New Brunswick issued a proclamation calling upon McIntire's captors to desist and return the arms. He then demanded that Maine recall her civil force and notified Governor Fairfield that military force would be used to ensure Great Britain's jurisdiction over the disputed territory. Major troop movements took place in New Brunswick.²⁴

Fairfield considered Governor Harvey's proclamation a declaration of war. As commander-in-chief of the Maine Militia, he issued a general order dated February 16, 1839, directing a detachment of 1,000 men from the Third Division to rendezvous at Bangor and Lincoln, proceed to the Aroostook River, and aid the land agent in policing the public lands.²⁵ He appointed Major General Isaac Hodsdon to command the militia during this third Aroostook expedition. A draft of 10,343 Maine militia had been made.

Jarvis described Fort Masardis as a temporary, although “most effectual,” defense made of logs and brush, with a four-pound cannon planted so as to efficiently command a reach of about eight rods along the river. To impede an attack through the woods, the militia felled trees in such a manner that a “force of 100 men made good our position against 500.”²⁶

Having received information that an English force at the mouth of the Tobique River consisted of only 70 men, Jarvis, on February 22, felt confident enough to proceed with 120 men down the Aroostook and take possession of a strong position at the mouth of the Little Machias River. There they built another breastwork of timber and bushwood. Reinforcements arrived on February 24 and 25, and on the night of the 25th, 300 men moved downriver 34 miles and took possession of the upper end of the portage above Aroostook Falls. Leaving a sufficient number of the posse to guard their supplies at Masardis, the remaining troops moved on to the mouth of the Presque Isle Stream.²⁷

Jarvis then moved part of his force still farther down the Aroostook River to a place he designated as Fort Fairfield. He described the position as naturally strong and indicated that no exertions would be spared to add to its natural strength. On March 1 he ordered a party of twenty men, well armed and equipped with good axes, to fell trees so as to obstruct about one mile of the Tobique Road as it passed over Maine's territory.²⁸ When Land Agent McIntire arrived to resume his position as commander at Fort Fairfield on March 6, he was greeted by a cannon salute, a compliment to the high respect entertained for him by the posse. Jarvis, who was a mile down the river superintending the quarrying of a ledge for the purpose of building the boom across the Aroostook, had at that time over 660 privates, well armed, with fifty days' provisions, and spirit up to the proper pitch.²⁹ The civil force was busily employed in raising breastworks on a fine elevation described by a visitor as one of the most commanding locations he had ever witnessed. Several barracks or huts, a guardhouse, and a storehouse had been built.

In the first range of townships, about three miles from the boundary line, preparations had begun for a boom across the Aroostook.³⁰ Jarvis and William P. Parrott selected a point where the river spreads out to nearly double its average width and the current would not be accelerated by putting in the piers. The sand and gravel bottom of the river provided solid footing for the piers. Parrott supervised a small crew in looking for timber and clearing roads. On March 11, actual construction work began on the 447-yard boom. Seven in number, the piers were placed in the form of a triangle with the vertex up river, at which point the largest pier was placed.³¹

On the northern bank of the river a clearing was made and a blockhouse erected. A mile or more from the bank of the river, a road had been cut back from the shore of the river to the portage road, and another from the other end of the portage, some distance from the bank, to Fairbanks on the Presque Isle. The result was a direct land communication to Presque Isle Stream from the post.³² A line of videttes, in connection with the mail and expresses from Augusta to Bangor, was established to form one line of communication to Houlton and another from Mattawamkeag Point to Number 10 on the Aroostook Road. Subsequently, posts were established between Houlton, Fort Fairfield, and the other military bases. Mounted cavalry, with a relay of horses at posts about ten miles apart, furnished daily, rapid communication between the executive, the several detachments of the militia, the land agent's forces, and the U. S. artillery at Hancock Barracks.³³

On February 21, 1839, the troops from the Third Division had assembled at Bangor, and as soon as the necessary arrangements were completed began the march to the Aroostook under the command of Major General Hodsdon.³⁴ From February 22 to February 28 militia units traveled to Houlton. On February 23, Colonel Jarvis, at Masardis, sent a letter to Hodsdon, expressing pleasure that he would be sustained by a detachment of 1,000 militia. He suggested to Hodsdon that he make his advances to the Aroostook area by way of Houlton, for there was a good road from Houlton to within six miles of the Presque Isle of the Aroostook.³⁵

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Hodsdon's orders, dated February 25, were to establish military posts at several specified points on the Aroostook and the St. John; to protect the soil of the state from all encroachment by armed men, whether in the form of plunderers of the public domain or the organized military of any foreign power; to maintain the integrity of the state up to the line as established by the Treaty of 1783; and to permit no military or other force to infringe upon the soil of Maine.³⁶ Hodsdon's detachment from the Third Division, organized into one company of cavalry, one company of artillery, four companies of light infantry, four companies of riflemen, and four companies of infantry, including all officers, numbered 1,069.³⁷ Hodsdon employed Colonel Henry E. Prentiss, an experienced scientific military engineer, to erect breastworks on roads near the Presque Isle of the St. John, arranging the lines in such a way as to concentrate three lines of fire on the roads. Camps were built behind the breastworks, to be occupied by the militia companies as they arrived.³⁸

As Hodsdon's Third Division moved northward, two companies were left on the Presque Isle of the St. John under command of Lieutenant Colonel Cummings, to guard a defile near the mouth of the river. This post was twenty-five miles north of Houlton on the Bridgewater Academy Grant, a little south of Mars Hill within a few rods of the east line of the state. The companies stationed here erected camps for their own accommodation.³⁹

Fort Fairfield, sixty-two miles north of Houlton, was furnished with two six- and two four-pounder field artillery.⁴⁰ When Hodsdon and the remainder of the detachment from the Third Division arrived on March 17, they were greeted by a salute of artillery and a cheering welcome from the military band stationed by the main entrance, near the riverfront. Headquarters for the Maine Militia, Army of the Aroostook, was then established at Fort Fairfield.⁴¹

Brigadier General Bachelder, commanding the First Brigade of the Second Division, excepting cavalry, arrived in Bangor on March 6 to be supplied with arms, clothing, and blankets in

preparation for the march. During Hodsdon's expedition to strategic positions in the Aroostook River area, Bachelder was to protect Hodsdon's western flank.⁴⁶ By March 12, he arrived at Township Number 4, on the Aroostook Road, as ordered.⁴² His detachment then moved on to Number 10, where it occupied the temporary works erected by the land agent's force. The troops immediately began construction of suitable camps and other necessary buildings. The artillery unit, which remained at this post, was furnished with two four-pounder field ordnance.⁴³

By March 4, Lieutenant Governor John Harvey had sent New Brunswick troops to Tobique and the mouth of the Aroostook with a ten-pound howitzer and fifty militia. The remainder of the 36th Regiment and 150 militia were headquartered at Woodstock. By March 5th, 270 effective soldiers of a British regiment from the West Indies arrived in New Brunswick.⁴⁴ Harvey had been instructed to confine his measures to the protection of the communication route between New Brunswick and Lower Canada, through the Valley of the St. John, and to protect her Majesty's subjects at the Madawaska Settlement. He ordered the 69th Regiment, just arrived at St. John, to Woodstock, deeming it a sufficient force to defend that position against all comers.⁴⁵

With a strong detachment of Britain's 11th Regiment, Colonel Goldie arrived at Madawaska on March 10, and, by the 13th, British and New Brunswick troops had been posted at Grand Falls, at the mouth of the Tobique River, the mouth of Meduxnekeag River, and at Woodstock, with dragoons to relay messages stationed every ten miles along the length of the St. John below Madawaska.⁴⁶

During the time that Hodsdon, Bachelder, and Harvey had been moving their troops into positions on their respective frontiers, Major General Winfield Scott, President Martin Van Buren's favorite trouble-shooter and successful arbiter in several former national crises, was active in his role as peacemaker. Prior to being dispatched to Maine, Scott arrived in Washington, D.C. from the Great Lakes on February 24, 1839.⁴⁷ All branches of the

government were alarmed at the imminent hazard of war. Scott reported to Secretary of War Poinsett, to the president, and testified before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of both houses of Congress. He succeeded in securing the passage of two bills, one authorizing the president to call out the militia for six months and to accept the service of 50,000 volunteers, and the other to place to the president's credit ten million dollars.⁴⁸

Part of Scott's strategy to keep peace in the region was to continue a correspondence with his old friend, Sir John Harvey. After the exchange of several letters, and in concurrence with the British and American ambassadors at Washington, he laid the groundwork for a truce. As Governor Fairfield explained to the state legislature:

Her Majesty's forces will not seek to expel by military force the armed party which has been sent by Maine into the district bordering on the Aroostook River; but ... the Government of Maine will voluntarily, and without unnecessary delay, withdraw beyond the bounds of the disputed territory any armed force now within them; and ... if future necessity should arrive for dispersing notorious trespassers, or protecting public property from depredation by armed force, the operation shall be conducted by concert, jointly or separately, according to agreement between the governments of Maine and New Brunswick.⁴⁹

On March 23, Harvey agreed to a proposition made by Scott, whereby Harvey would declare that it was not his intention, without new instructions from his government, to attempt military possession of the disputed territory or to seek by military force to expel the armed civil posse or troops of Maine. The Maine Legislature, on the same day, passed a resolve stating that whenever Maine's governor was fully satisfied that the lieutenant governor of New Brunswick had abandoned all intention of occupying the disputed territory with a military force, he should be authorized to withdraw the troops, leaving the land agent with a sufficient posse to protect the state's timber. Having received Harvey's declaration, on March 25, 1839 Governor Fairfield

directed the troops on the northeastern frontier to return to the city of Bangor to be discharged. On March 30 he amended the order to permit several companies to remain on the Aroostook waters until a sufficient civil force arrived under the direction of the land agent.⁵⁰

Upon the arrival of the militia, McIntire had discharged all but a few men to guard the boom. With a posse reduced to about sixty men, Charles Jarvis still could not relax his vigil; he feared that the threat of military engagement was still very real. McIntire's men had been reconnoitering the woods between Fort Fairfield and the Madawaska settlement.⁵¹ There, rumors of provincial and regular troop movement reached him, and he learned of a large number of "axes" (expert choppers) sent upriver. The New Brunswick militia, he thought, might move directly to the Aroostook River posts. More to the point, New Brunswick lumbermen might resume large-scale trespass logging operations.⁵²

Therefore, on March 27, Jarvis sent orders to a veteran of numerous encounters with trespassers, Assistant Land Agent Alvin Nye. His orders were to proceed with the volunteers under his direction to Fish River and determine the best location for a boom to effectually stop the passage of the timber down that river. Having determined the location, he was to prepare good accommodations for the men in a camp constructed in such a way that it could be expanded into a blockhouse to defend the boom against an attack by a mob. Nye was then to construct the boom in the best manner he could with the means at his command. Should he be threatened by a British military force, he was to exercise his own discretion as to resistance. Jarvis warned Nye that in no event was he to cross the St. John to the north.⁵³ Nye and his party proceeded to Fish River and erected a blockhouse and a boom at a place about four miles down Fish River from Eagle Lake, a location presently known as Soldier Pond. Jarvis reported that during the autumn of 1839, while on an inspection tour of road building in that area, he traveled to Fish River and, descending the river four miles from Eagle Lake, "arrived at the upper blockhouse and boom erected by Alvin Nye, in April last."⁵⁴

Nye's men had been at work on the blockhouse and boom for seven or eight days when Nye was obliged to return some militiamen to Fort Machias.⁵⁵ Jarvis learned of the troop recall and hurried to Fort Fairfield, where he readily acquired the needed volunteers and rejoined Nye at Fort Machias.⁵⁶ He ordered Nye to return to Fish River, complete the fortifications and boom, select the best tract of land adjacent to his post, and employ the men in making a large clearing. Sown with grass seed, the clearing would furnish the state with abundant forage for draft animals to be used in road construction.⁵⁷

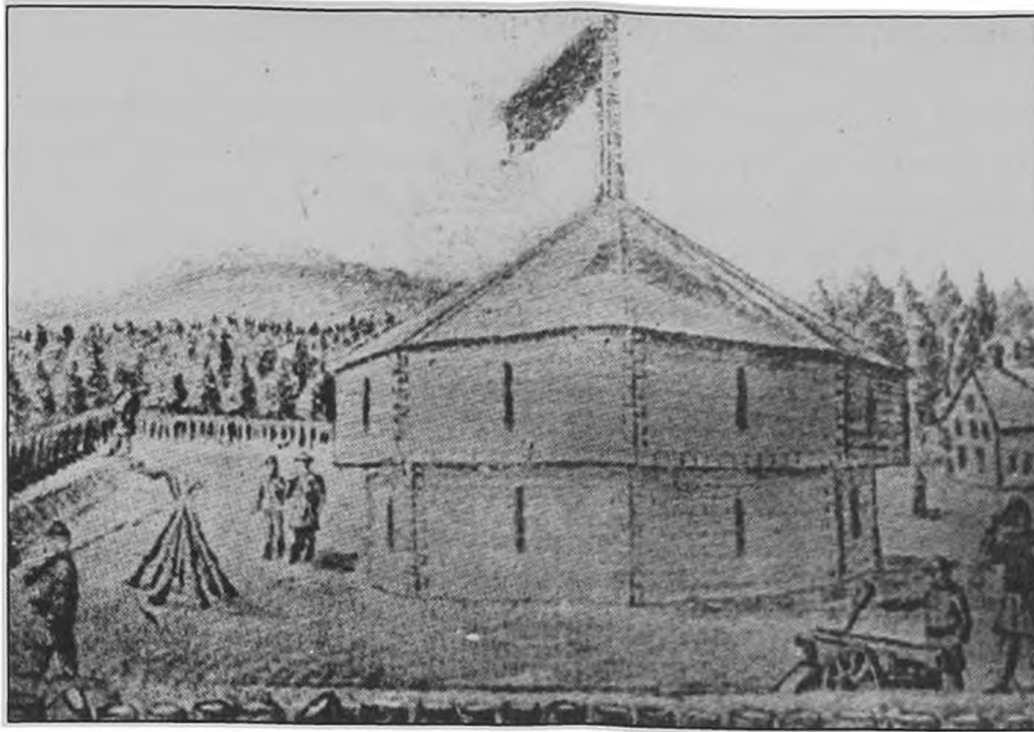
Nye reported to Jarvis from Fort Jarvis, at the mouth of Fish River, on April 23:

I take this opportunity to inform you of my doings, which is according to order. We arrived here after a hard siege. We then went to work on the blockhouse and boom. The boom is completed. It is four hundred feet long and is in a good place

... We shall move into the blockhouse tomorrow. It is very strong built; it is principally built of hewn timber twenty inches thick, and on a high point of land. We can reach both ends of the boom with a musket, from the house. The French have been here and they are glad that we Americans are going to have their land. They are all friendly.⁵⁸

At Fort Fairfield, Hodsdon's Third Division was reduced to a detachment made up of one company of light infantry, one company of riflemen, and two companies of infantry to protect the state's timber from trespass lumbermen until a sufficient civil force was procured by the land agent.⁵⁹

Because the season was rapidly approaching when, if ever, a mob attack might be expected on the Aroostook River boom, Jarvis lost no time in preparing defenses to enable a small number of men to resist a much larger force. In order to prevent any attempts by trespassers to cut the boom, Jarvis requested, and received from the governor, discretionary power to fix limits of encroachment adjacent to the boom. He also suggested to Fairfield the propriety of erecting three blockhouses near the boom.



Sketch of Fort Fairfield on the Aroostook River. From Burrage, *Maine in the Northeastern Boundary Controversy*, 1919.

After the quota of volunteers had been obtained, two companies of infantry at Fort Fairfield returned to Bangor. Jarvis then left Fort Fairfield to attend to road-building duties, appointing William Parrott to command in his absence.⁶⁰

On April 9 the land agent's volunteers commenced to build.⁶¹ Twenty feet square on the lower story and twenty-six on the upper story, large enough to quarter sixty men, it was constructed within musket shot of the boom. The walls of the lower story were twenty-two inches thick and had loopholes all around; the upper parts of the walls were built of timber, nine inches thick. Nearby stood a small house for cooking and another, on the bank of the river immediately below, for securing the boats' rigging and tools used about the boom and timber. In the immediate vicinity of the blockhouse, the ground had been cleared of trees.

Downriver, at the boom, a second blockhouse was built. This was larger, being six-sided and twenty feet on a side on the lower story and twenty-six feet on a side in the upper story. It was pierced with loopholes in each story and in the roof and surrounded by 180 yards of stockade built of timber and filled in with earth, enclosing also a barracks building and cookhouse. This

fort could accommodate 350 men. Each blockhouse had a cellar for provisions. The whole of the hill upon which the lower blockhouse was situated had been cleared and a large part of it planted with sufficient oats, potatoes, and barley to last the men through the winter. The volunteers also erected a barn and completed the road from the blockhouses to Houlton.⁶²

When Alvin Nye moved into Fort Jarvis on April 24, he had, in effect, begun to enforce Maine's jurisdiction of the lands west of the Madawaska settlement and south of the St. John River. He had succeeded in stemming the flow of trespass timber on the Fish River by means of a temporary boom stretched across the channel between an island and the mainland.⁶³

Nye received word that a New Brunswick official at Allagash was planning to escort a party of provincial lumbermen driving timber down the St. John River. He informed agent James MacLauchlan that removing timber from the territory would "be in violation of the right of the State."⁶⁴ On the night of May 15, John Baker arrived at Fort Fairfield from Fish River and reported that Nye had driven off a gang of trespassers with MacLauchlan at their head. The New Brunswick official had set off downriver to procure reinforcements. Baker expressed the opinion that reinforcements should be sent to Nye. Thomas Bartlett, Jr. readily volunteered and with twenty-five men started early the next morning.⁶⁵ However, the incident was not repeated.

At Fort Fairfield, the militia was replaced by a company of volunteers in early May, and, in view of the rising tension between the volunteers and local lumbermen, Deputy Land Agent William Parrott issued orders that:

No person, either in a boat or on the land, is to be permitted to come within ten rods on either side or end of the boom. All persons are to be challenged and examined who come after dark, and if any suspicious circumstances are seen they are to be detained and reported immediately to the officer of the day. Any attempts at violent assault upon the boom or timber in the boom, by men armed in any manner whatever, with probable



Conflicting American and British claims to land north of Mars Hill (pictured above) fueled the boundary crisis in 1839. Maine's claims to the territory were defended by forts at Masardis and Fort Fairfield on the Aroostook and later Fort Kent on the Fish River. From Burnage, *Maine in the Northeastern Boundary Dispute*, 1919.

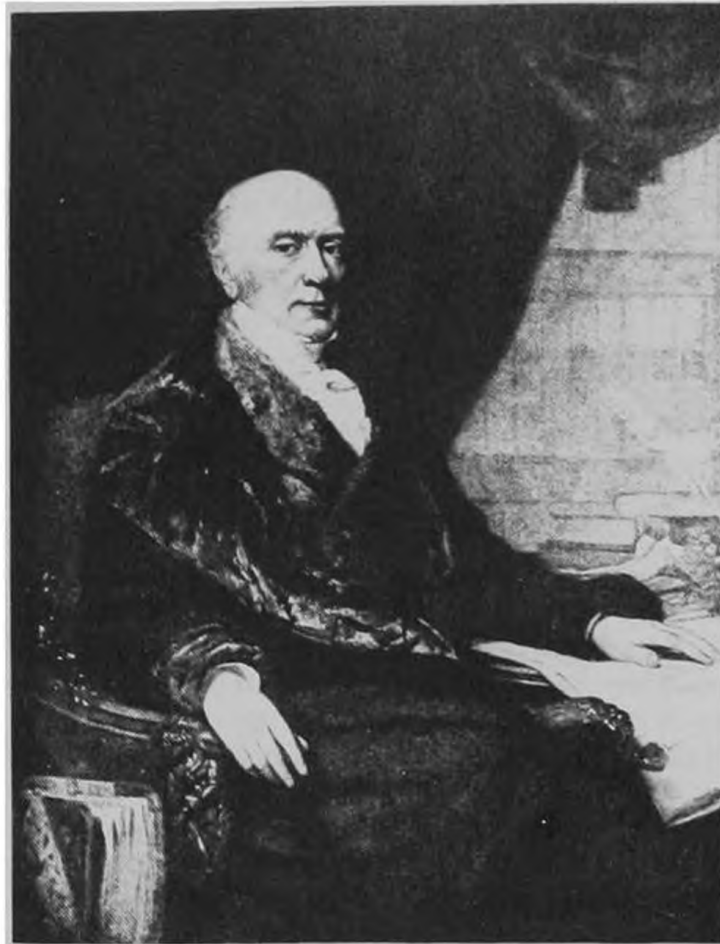
intent to cut the boom, is [sic] to be repelled by force, and any approach of a body of men within the limits above mentioned, who do not desist from further progress when hailed, will be prevented from going to the boom by force, and fired upon if they cannot be stopped otherwise.⁶⁶

During the summer and into the first part of September, Parrott continued his efforts to protect timber in the disputed territory. He often dispatched men from his civil force into the lumbering districts to search out, measure, and dispose of any timber cut by trespassers.⁶⁷ Parrott's disposition to halt all timber cut on the Aroostook River at the boom for inspection caused animosity among upriver lumbermen. At three o'clock on the morning of September 8, a large band of men from the province launched an attack on the boom and blockhouse. Reportedly, they were commanded by an officer of the Militia of New Brunswick and armed with government arms. The night was very dark and the sentinel fired upon them without challenging; they took to their heels, some leaving behind hats, powder, muskets, and bayonets.⁶⁸

Incidents such as those at Forts Jarvis and Fairfield, coupled with the glacial pace of boundary negotiations, exasperated Maine's officials. At the beginning of his second term in 1840, Governor John Fairfield expostulated that Maine was being "deprived of her territory by ... a system of vexation and unjustifiable procrastination The withdrawing of the troops, was in no sense an abandonment of any position taken by this State Now our territory is actually invaded."⁶⁹

The governor worried that British troops were fortifying the region north of the St. John River. At the head of the Madawaska River the troops had constructed fortifications and storehouses; more stood at the head of Temiscouata Lake, and provincial authorities had improved river and overland transportation in the territory north and east of the Aroostook territory.⁷⁰ At the same time, Land Agent McIntire reported that the volunteers under the charge of George W. Towle at Fort Fairfield had been reduced to eight; at Fish River, McIntire retained fourteen under the charge of Stover Rines. He concluded that from fifty to a hundred thousand dollars worth of timber would have been stripped from the public lands in that year had it not been for their presence.⁷¹

In 1841, Edward Kent, in his second non-consecutive term as governor, succeeded in having federal troops stationed in Maine's northernmost fortifications. This resulted from joint investigation by the land agents of Maine and Massachusetts, who reported upon further British military activities at the mouth of the Madawaska River. The British were erecting a substantial blockhouse on the northeast side of the river about one hundred rods from the St. John. Five other military stations had been built on the route from the Aroostook to Grand Falls and over the portage from Temiscouata to the St. Lawrence River.⁷² In view of these circumstances, the governors of Maine and Massachusetts renewed their call for relief from the expense of maintaining an armed civil posse for the defence of their territories and recommended that the federal government take possession of Fort Kent (the former Fort Jarvis) and Fort Fairfield. As a result, on August 14, two companies of federal



LORD ASHURTON.
From portrait in the State Department in Washington

troops were dispatched from Hancock Barracks at Houlton, one of them to be stationed at Fort Fairfield and the other at Fort Kent.

Even after the signing of the Treaty of Washington of 1842, otherwise known as the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, troops were maintained at these forts. But in September 1843 all units were recalled to Hancock Barracks. On April 5, 1844, because of heavy protest at the state level, Fort Kent was once more occupied, this time by Company G of the First Artillery, a unit

consisting of 52 men. The last notation in the records of Company G at Fort Kent was made in August 1844. Early in 1845, partly because of the approaching Mexican War, troops were gradually withdrawn from all of northern Maine. In August 1845, Hancock Barracks' last report showed an aggregate of 54 men.⁷³ Aroostook's fortification era had come to an end.

NOTES

¹Maine claimed the area west of a line running northerly from the monument at the source of the St. Croix River to the northwest corner of Nova Scotia (New Brunswick), which was located in the highlands near the St. Lawrence River. Great Britain contested this claim, and the lands therein became known as the disputed territory.

²*Resolves of the State of Maine* (hereinafter cited as *ROSM*), vol. 1 (Augusta, Maine: W. R. Smith, Printers to the State, 1842), pp. 537-47.

³*Report of Mr. Charles S. Daveis, 1828*, no. 16, State of Maine Executive Department Records.

⁴*Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Canadian Relations, 1784-1860* (hereinafter cited as *DCUSCR*), vol. 2, (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1942), pp. 136-37.

⁵U. S. Congress, Senate document no. 130, 20th Cong., 1st sess., in the United States Congressional Serials Set, Vol. 166, issued on March 3, 1828; *Statements relating to alleged aggressions on the rights of citizens of the United States by the authorities of New Brunswick on the territory in dispute between the United States and Great Britain*, pp. 1-43.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Maine Documents*, vol. 2, document no. 20.

⁸*DCUSCR*, vol. 2, pp. 148-63.

⁹Lincoln Family Papers (hereafter cited as LFP), octavo vol. 35, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. An act of the Twentieth Congress provided authority for funding the opening of a military road in the state of Maine. Maine also had set aside funds for the road in anticipation of a border crisis.

¹⁰*Executive Document no. 126*, 25th Cong., 2d sess.; John G. Deane to Governor Enoch Lincoln, October 26, 1828, LFP, octavo vol. 35.

¹¹Monthly returns of the commanding officers of the Second Infantry at Hancock Barracks, Houlton, Maine from 1828 to 1839, National Archives,

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Record Group 94, (hereafter cited as NARG 94) Muster Roll, Regular Army Companies, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917. National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy 617, Roll 448, Hancock Barracks, Houlton, Maine.

¹²Monthly returns of the commanding officers of the Second Infantry at Hancock Barracks, Houlton, Maine, from 1828 to 1839, NARG 94, Muster Roll, Regular Army Companies, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917. National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy 617, Roll 448, Hancock Barracks, Houlton, Maine.

¹³Francis Barnes, *The Story of Houlton* (Houlton, Maine: Will H. Smith, 1889), not paginated.

¹⁴Monthly returns of the commanding officers of the Second Infantry at Hancock Barracks, Houlton, Maine from 1828 to 1839, NARG 94, Muster Roll, Regular Army Companies, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917. National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy 617, Roll 448, Hancock Barracks, Houlton, Maine. For many years, Smith's grave was marked by a small white cross at the head of a heap of boulders, but in 1938 the Lydia Putnam Chapter, D.A.R., placed a small granite marker on his grave, which is located near Haynesville.

¹⁵Barnes, *Story of Houlton*.

¹⁶It should be acknowledged that family and business relationships were so intermingled along the along the supposed boundary line that trespassing was often carried out as a joint venture between American and Canadian citizens. Federal Infantry Troops at Hancock Barracks, Houlton, had been replaced by three companies of the First Regiment of Artillery on December 26, 1838.

¹⁷*ROSM*, vol. 3, pp. 17-28.

¹⁸*Report of Deputy Land Agent George W. Buckmore to Land Agent Elijah Hamlin*, authorized December 14, 1838, and submitted January 22, 1839.

¹⁹U. S. Congress, House Ex. doc. no. 222, Third sess., February 26, 1839, pp. 6-7.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Register of Enlisted Men in the U. S. Army*, vol. 76, p. 213, #5937, National Archives.

²²Rufus McIntire, *Report of the Maine Land Agent, 1839* (Augusta, Maine, 1839). McIntire was released on a parole of honor on February 18, 1839.

²³John Fairfield to Charles Jarvis, February 15, 1839, *Collection of Official Papers, Northeast Boundary Dispute*, Maine Historical Society.

²⁴U. S. Congress, Third Session, February 26, 1839, House Document no. 222, p. 13.

²⁵Abner B. Thompson, *Report of the Adjutant General, 1839* (Augusta, Maine, 1839).

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²⁶Charles Jarvis to John Fairfield, February 19, 1839, John Fairfield Papers (hereafter cited as JFP), coll. 145B, folder 3/8, Maine Historical Society.

²⁷Samuel Smith to Isaac Hodsdon, February 28, 1839, JFP, folder 3/8.

²⁸Charles Jarvis to John Fairfield, March 1, 1839, JFP, folder 4/1.

²⁹Charles Jarvis to John Fairfield, March 8, 1839; B. Wiggin to John Fairfield, March 8, 1839, JFP, folder 4/1.

³⁰John Dumont to John Fairfield, March 9, 1839; Rufus McIntire to Fairfield, March 7, 1839, JFP, folder 4/2.

³¹"Report of William Parrott to Land Agent McIntire," in McIntire, *Report of the Maine Land Agent, 1839*.

³²Rufus McIntire to John Fairfield, March 7, 1839, JFP, folder 4. 2.

³³Thompson, *Report of the Adjutant General, 1839*.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Charles Jarvis to Issac Hodsdon, February 23, 1839, Official Hodsdon Papers (hereafter cited as IHP), Maine Historical Society.

³⁶Thompson, *Report of the Adjutant General, 1839*.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Isaac Hodsdon to John Fairfield, n.d., JFP, folder 3/6; Henry E. Prentiss to Hodsdon, March 4, 1839, IHP.

³⁹Thompson, *Report of the Adjutant General, 1839*, p. 16.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 17.

⁴¹Elijah Lowe, Jr., to Francis Barnes, February 14, 1890, Cary Public Library, Houlton, Maine.

⁴²Thompson, *Report of the Adjutant General, 1839*; Captain William H. Mills to Isaac Hodsdon, March 6, 1839, IHP.

⁴³Thompson, *Report of the Adjutant General, 1839*.

⁴⁴John Harvey to Henry S. Fox, British Ambassador to Washington, March 6, 1839; *Royal Gazette*, March 27, 1839; Harvey to Col. Goldie, March 4, 1839, *Letter Book of Governor Harvey* (hereafter cited as LBJH), Public Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

⁴⁵John Harvey to Henry S. Fox, March 6, 1839; Harvey to Lieutenant Colonel Maxwell, March 6, 1839, LBJH.

⁴⁶John Harvey to Lord Glenelg, March 13, 1839, Public Archives of Canada (hereafter cited as PAC), COP 188, B16.

⁴⁷Reuel Williams to John Fairfield, February 24, 1839, JFP, folder B3/10.

⁴⁸Winfield Scott, *Autobiography of Lieutenant General Winfield Scott* (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1864), p. 333. The bill also appropriated \$18,000 for a special embassy to London.

⁴⁹"John Fairfield's Address to the Maine Legislature, February 12, 1839," ROSM, vol. 3, pp. 157-65.

⁵⁰Thompson, *Report of the Adjutant General, 1839*, pp. 19-21. Orders were issued on March 25 for the discharge of troops stationed at Augusta, and on April 4 for those stationed at Calais.

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⁵¹Charles Jarvis to Isaac Hodsdon, March 30, 1839; IHP; Rufus McIntire to John Fairfield, March 16, 1839, JFP, folder 4-3.

⁵²Rufus McIntire to John Fairfield, March 11, 1839, JFP, folder 4-3.

⁵³Charles Jarvis to Alvin Nye, March 27, 1839, JFP, folder 4-4.

⁵⁴This "Long Lake" is not to be confused with Long Lake in Townships 17 and 18, Ranges 4 and 7. This lake, located in Township 15, Range 7, Winterville, is shown on modern maps as St. Froid Lake. Charles Jarvis, *Report of the Land Agent, 1839* (Augusta, 1893).

⁵⁵Charles Jarvis to Isaac Hodsdon, March 30, 1839, HIP.

⁵⁶Charles Jarvis to Alvin Nye, April 3, 1839; Jarvis to John Fairfield, April 5, JFP, folder 4-6.

⁵⁷Charles Jarvis to Alvin Nye, April 3, 1839, JFP, folder 4-6.

⁵⁸Diary and Letter Book of William Parrott (hereafter cited as Parrott Diary), Maine State Archives, Augusta.

⁵⁹*General Order no. 30, March 30, 1839* (Augusta: State Printers, 1839), *Aroostook War, Historical Sketch and Roster of Commissioned Officers and Enlisted Men, 1839* (Augusta: Kennebec Journal Print, 1904), p. 19.

⁶⁰Charles Jarvis to John Fairfield, March 30, 31, April 9, 1839, JFP, folder 4-5; Samuel Smith to Isaac Hodsdon, April 11, 1839, IHP.

⁶¹Parrott Diary, page 1, April 19, 1839.

⁶²Jarvis, *Report of the Land Agent, 1839*.

⁶³Parrott Diary, April 23, 1839, p. 6.

⁶⁴Alvin Nye to James MacLauchlan, May 10, 1839. Fairfield Papers, Library of Congress, copy at Dyer Library, Saco, Maine.

⁶⁵Parrott Diary, Parrott to Alvin Nye, May 16, 1839, p. 19.

⁶⁶Ibid., page 13, May 2, 1839.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 14-54, May 2 to September 8, 1839.

⁶⁸William Parrott to Rufus McIntire, Parrott Diary, pp. 54-57, September 8, 1839.

⁶⁹*Resolves of the State of Maine, 1839*, vol. 4, pp. 228-42.

⁷⁰Mark Little to John Fairfield, February 8, 1840, *The Papers of John Fairfield*, mss. 19254, Library of Congress (from microfilm at Dyer Library, Saco).

⁷¹Rufus McIntire, *Report of the Land Agent, 1840* (Augusta, Maine, 1840), pp. 2-3.

⁷²Elijah Hamlin, *Report of the Land Agent, 1841* (Augusta, Maine, 1841), pp. 1-4.

⁷³NARG 94, Muster Roll, Regular Army Companies, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917; National Archives Microfilm Publications, Microcopy 617: Roll 448, monthly returns of the commanding officers of the 1st Artillery, Hancock Barracks, Houlton, Maine; Roll 357, monthly returns of the commanding officers of the 1st Artillery, Fort Fairfield, Maine; Roll 571, monthly returns of the commanding officers of the 1st Artillery, Fort Kent, Maine; see monthly reports for August, 1841; September, 1843; March, April and August, 1844; August, 1845.