

Eben Stanwood, West Newbury's highest ranking Civil War vet, Town statesman, husband

West Newbury's [highest ranking Civil War soldier](#), Lt. Col. Ebenezer (Eben) Poore Stanwood, was born on August 30, 1832 in West Newbury to William Stanwood and his second wife, Edna Stickney Poor. He was the youngest of his mother's five children to grow to adulthood and he alone lived with his widowed mother through his late 20s. He was, at that time, a shoemaker.

Around 1860, Eben began courting Mary Loranza Noyes, daughter of combmaking industrialist [Somerby Chase Noyes](#). He wooed her with notes and carriage rides: "I will do as the teachers do, divide my discussion into four parts--First shall you be particularly engaged on Wednesday? Second if not, would you like to take a jaunt to Plum Island? Third would you object to riding down with me? Fourth will you please answer by return of bearer? Please excuse a great many things too numerous to mention. Yours in great haste E. P. Stanwood." They married on January 1, 1862.

Having joined [Ben Perley Poore's Rifle Regiment](#) as a Sergeant in 1852, rising to 1st Lieutenant, Eben enlisted as a Captain in the [Mass. 48th Infantry](#) on [August 30, 1862](#). Mary was five months pregnant at the time. Their letters, preserved at the G.A.R. Library, make it clear that he viewed military life as "a pretty good time....," particularly when the 48th—which was to participate in [General Nathaniel Banks'](#) expedition to control Port Hudson, LA and thus the upper Mississippi River—experienced months in camp in Wenham and then near Boston before even mustering in.

Mary, meanwhile, was in distress. Women in childbirth in this era faced at least as much danger as soldiers at war. On December 24, 1862, she delivered daughter Mabel. Eben had a furlough for the birth but departed three days later for New Orleans. He wrote her on their first New Year's anniversary, "You must be careful of your health as well.... I think there is full as much danger there at home to you in your condition as to me in the South." Mary suffered fevers, pain, and other symptoms, perhaps including postpartum depression. She did not fully recover until May.

In the first months of 1863 Mary faced homefront challenges ranging from a demanding baby to a difficult mother-in-law ("I have the same rights that other

wives have and I think your mother ought to realize that."). As reported in a [history of the 48th](#), at this time Eben was in Baton Rouge, "learning [that] to wait is one of the chief duties of a soldier as it is indeed one of the most irksome." Mary worried about his health ("I don't know where you are dearest husband and I have felt so terribly blue.... I am almost afraid something evil has befallen you.") and his morals ("I hope and believe that camp life will...enable you to live a higher and better life than you have hitherto led.")

Finally, in May, the 48th joined a [force of 30,000 surrounding Port Hudson](#), a very small town with a very big military asset consisting of a commanding location perched on a bluff overlooking a hairpin turn in the Mississippi, surrounded by deep swamps and forests. The "citadel" was a series of earthenwork fortifications. By dint of what was viewed as foolish bravery, the [48th's Lt. Col. James O'Brien died](#) in an assault on May 21. Eben was appointed acting Lt. Col. on June 6 and unanimously voted into that position six days later. After other failed attacks in June, Banks' troops settled in for what became the [longest siege in American military history](#). Port Hudson surrendered shortly after Grant's July 4 victory at [Vicksburg, MS](#).

Mary's July 9 letter expressed her joy at Eben's well-being and her grief for the women in Town who lost loved ones: "Why am I spared from sorrow and despair while thousands of women in this country are mourning their dearest friends? What narrow escapes you have had thus far!" After a final mid-July battle in which Eben was "untouched, with the exception of [a bullet] through my coattail," he and the 48th were "heartily sick of the sound of war." They mustered out on September 3, 1863.

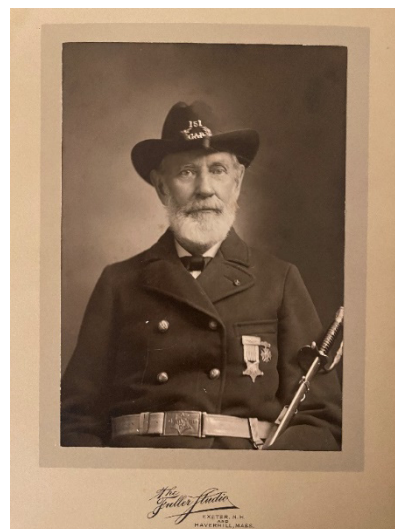
Except for a short stint as a grocer in Newton in the early 1870s, Eben, Mary, and their daughters remained in West Newbury. Eben worked in farming, shoe manufacturing, and ultimately with his in-laws in a variety of roles in the [box making branch of the comb industry](#). He [served as state representative, Town clerk, library trustee](#), and for 25 years as commander of the Major Boyd G.A.R. Post, where he [vehemently opposed the Soldiers & Sailors building](#). Eben died on April 3, 1913, Mary on December 1, 1917. They are buried together at the [Merrimack Cemetery](#).

With thanks to the G.A.R. Library for archival material including the Stanwoods' Civil War letters

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1863 Portrait of Eben Stanwood and hat from his service as 1st Lt. in Ben Perley Poore's First Rifle Brigade *Source: G.A.R. Library*



CITADEL PORT HUDSON, LA.,
Previous to Assault of June 14, 1863.

Eben Stanwood
as G.A.R. Post
Commander
*Source: G.A.R.
Library*



INSIDE REBEL BREASTWORKS.
Port Hudson, La., After Surrender, July 8, 1863.

Source of Port Hudson Photos:

[*History of the Forty-eighth Regiment, M.V.M. during the Civil War*](#)

West Newbury, Jan 29th 1868

My dear Eben.

I am sitting by the side of our baby, in her cradle. Mother is in the kitchen making up bread for tomorrow's baking, father and Ellen have gone to a lecture the second of a course, given by Dr. Miller of New York upon Physiology and Anatomy, and baby and I just now have the sitting room to ourselves. I have been thinking of you nearly all day, and cannot resist the inclination to write to you to night. There is something about this evening which reminds me very forcibly of you. I cannot think of anything else - perhaps it is because it is "Thursday night," and the spirit of old times comes over me. For I have been thinking much of the past all day, and of the many happy hours we have spent together. How I prize the memory of your kind near to me and of the love you have felt for me so long and still more so I enjoy the thought that you love me still although we are now so widely separated, even more tenderly than when we could see each other every day.

We have had quite a snow storm last night and

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