

Major Isaac Hills Boyd, Esq. — Civil War Hero and Politician for the People

Isaac Hills Boyd, a war hero and potential statesman lost too young, was born in West Newbury on February 15, 1838, to [Dr. Isaac Boyd](#) and West Newbury native [Sarah Coffin Hills](#), whose father, Eliphalet Hills, was among the [Town's largest taxpayers](#). The oldest of three children, Boyd attended [Phillips Academy](#) in Andover, MA, in 1854. After graduation, he studied law in the offices of Eben F. Stone in Newburyport.

By age 22, Boyd was a promising lawyer and rising Republican star. He [passed his examinations](#) and was admitted to practice law in all courts of the Commonwealth in December 1860, opening a practice at 46 [State Street](#) in Newburyport. In the same year, Boyd became involved in local Republican politics. He [addressed a West Newbury Town Hall](#) meeting in August 1860, reviewing the political parties' positions, and stressing that the safety of the country depended on the election of Republican candidates in the next election. In November he was chosen as a delegate to the State Convention, and was in the running to become the Republican candidate for the 17th District. Although he lost to a caucus favorite, Boyd made many speeches as the people's candidate, [claiming the voters had been tricked by old guard politicians](#).

On July 19, 1861, the Newburyport [Daily Herald](#) ran the last ever advertisement for Isaac H. Boyd, attorney at law. A few days earlier, Boyd (who was among those [waiting at Camp Sylvester](#)) [addressed approximately 70 soldiers](#) who were about to leave West Newbury to join the [19th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment's](#) Company A in Lynnfield. Boyd formally enlisted on August 22, 1861, joining Company A as a 2nd Lieutenant.

As part of the [Army of the Potomac](#), the 19th saw action in many of the most fierce and consequential Civil War battles including Yorktown, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and Cold Harbor. The regiment was widely recognized in Massachusetts, having fought in 45 battles, more than any other, performing with ["more promptness and alertness."](#) The 19th was characterized by its kind and brotherly feeling, commended many times and never censured by superior officers.

As an officer, Boyd continued to champion the people: he reported to the [Daily Herald in October 1862](#) that at the battle of Antietam his soldiers were in the "hottest of the fight, and obeyed orders as coolly as on parade.... How does it happen that when Massachusetts sends new regiments to the field, whose safety and efficiency depend on their officers, that men like those of the 19th Regiment, bearing honorable wounds and covered with the glories of war, are not commissioned as officers?" Boyd wrote to [report the deceased and wounded](#), and regularly sent the [Daily Herald](#) descriptions of important battles.

When on leave in West Newbury in August, 1863, [Boyd was described](#) as "the one who has passed through every battle in which this regiment has been engaged and escaped unharmed." This was so almost to the war's end. Boyd was shot in action on April 7, 1865, in Farmville, Virginia. He died there on April 8 at the age of 27—one day before Robert E. Lee's surrender ended the war.

The [Daily Herald's obituary](#) declared Boyd the most gallant of the gallant 19th Regiment, "animated by the strongest love of country, and counted his life and happiness as trifles, if they were needed for the support of order, constitution and union." On the eve of his funeral, the citizens of West Newbury met, unanimously adopting [four resolutions](#) to recognize the Town's irreparable loss of a valuable citizen as well as Boyd's ardent patriotism and fidelity through hardships.

The funeral service for Major Isaac Boyd was a large gathering with full military honors; it is [said that there never was such a funeral in Town before it](#). Besides many men from military regiments from across the country, national and state officers and other community leaders gathered to pay their respects. A procession formed at 11:00 a.m. on April 27, 1865, with more than one hundred carriages and another hundred people on foot to make way to the Walnut Hill Cemetery where he is buried.

In 1874 a chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic was formed in West Newbury and named the [Major Boyd Post # 151](#) in Isaac Boyd's honor.

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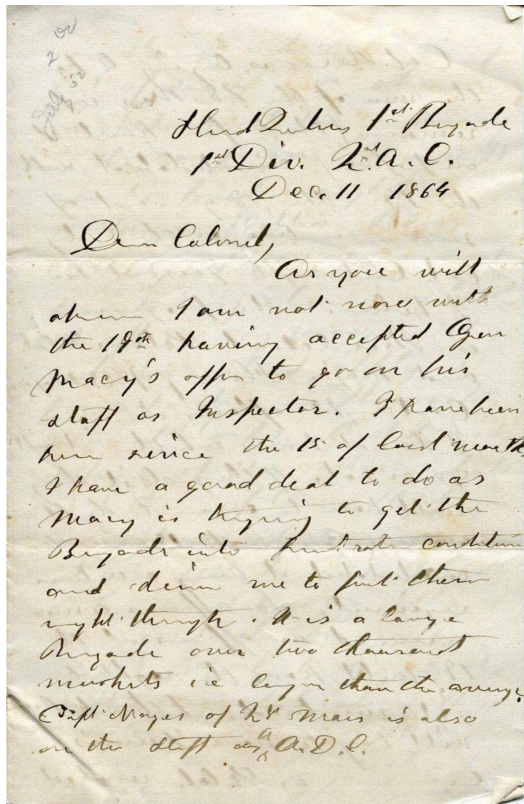


Photo of a letter Captain Isaac Boyd wrote.
Source: [Hollywood Memorabilia](#).

CAPT. BOYD, of Co. A—from West Newbury—19th Regiment, is now at home, being one of the officers detailed to take charge of the conscripts. We are happy to see that he is in good health and spirits, and looks to a speedy termination of the war. The 19th has seen as much hard fighting as any regiment from this State. It has left its dead on every well-fought field from the Peninsula to Gettysburg. It now numbers some 300; though Capt. Boyd's company has not over ten men that could be brought into an immediate fight. Capt. Boyd is all the one who has passed through every battle in which this regiment has been engaged and escaped unharmed.

Above, an excerpt from the [Daily Herald August 4, 1863](#).



Isaac Hills Boyd
Source: [Historical Data Systems](#)

Major Boyd, as we have said, was as brave as the bravest. We have often heard the men of the 19th speak of his coolness on the battle-field. They said that no one could have known from his conduct that he thought it possible for him to receive injury; and up to the time of his late visit here, two weeks ago, he had not received a single scratch; still he was not reckless nor insensible to danger, and has told us that it was nonsense for men to talk of going into battle without apprehension for the result. Nor was he in the army from love of camp and military life; anything else would have suited him as well; but he was there from a sense of duty, nor did he think of retiring while the conflict lasted. He was animated by the strongest love of country, and counted his life and happiness as trifles, if they were needed for the support of order, constitution and union. He could not fail to make a good officer—intelligent as brave, always cool, ever prompt, devoting himself life and soul to duty—it was not surprising that he should receive the commendation of superior officers, as well as the approval of the lower ranks. They will miss him—they will mourn him, as will his acquaintances at home. He departs in the morning of life, but 28 years old, and when the future was all bright and promising before him. He passed on in the shadowy land, pitching his tent on the other side of the great river, where thousands and hundreds of thousands of the best, the noblest youth of the country have preceded him, self-offered sacrifices for American nationality and human freedom. Peace, peace be to so brave a spirit.



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Isaac Boyd's pipe carved with battle names
Source: [Heritage Auctions](#)