

HEBRON: On Thursday, June 2, an historical marker was dedicated in Hebron to New Hampshire Civil War Governor Nathaniel Berry. Nathaniel Springer Berry was a tanner in Hebron in the 1840's and 1850's. In 1860 Nathaniel Berry was elected to be Governor of New Hampshire and guided the state through the turbulent Civil War years. Nathaniel Berry had little formal education and began his political career as a state representative in 1828, 1833-4, and 1837. He was elected to the State Senate (1835/6) and was a delegate to the Democrats' national convention of 1840 which chose President Martin Van Buren as their candidate for a second term. Governor Berry's career as governor coincides with major changes in the American political system. Berry was committed to stopping the spread of slavery into new territories won from Mexico in the Mexican War of 1846. As a new Republican, Berry was nominated for governor by the New Hampshire Republican Party in 1860. The first Republican presidential candidate, Abraham Lincoln, had been elected in 1860, and the Civil War was underway. Berry won over George Stark, 35,467 votes to 31,452 and was inaugurated in June of 1861. Berry was reelected in 1862, (again over George Stark) and his efforts were all associated with the war needs. His government enlisted and equipped fifteen infantry regiments, three companies of sharpshooters, four companies of cavalry and one company of heavy artillery.

Governor Berry led twenty-two governors in support of the war, delivering their joint address to President Lincoln at the Altoona, PA Conference of 1862. The conference called for a large increase in the army, and strongly endorsed the emancipation proclamation. The proclamation to the President was to be delivered by Governor Berry. After its adoption it was determined that the governors should call upon the President in person to give the greatest possible effect to their action. On September 26, 1862, twelve of the governors met with the president at the White House, where Governor Berry as spokesman read the proclamation and described the results of their discussions to him. President Lincoln's reply was brief, and consisted of thanks to the Governors for all they had done and for all they had promised to do to help the Government in this great crisis. As to the Emancipation Proclamation, he said no fact had assured him so thoroughly of the justice of the proclamation as that the Executives of the loyal States gave it their hearty approval.

Thus the Altoona Conference was, next to the Proclamation of Emancipation, the most decisive civil event of the war. It aroused the latent fires of the Union and gave new strength and hope to the soldiers in the field.

During the War, Berry did much besides recruit soldiers. He also formed what is today one of the oldest Army Bands, the Never's Band. Founded by Berry as part of a Third New Hampshire Regiment, Nevers' Band is one of the oldest continuing musical organizations in New Hampshire and one of the oldest bands in America. Though originally a 24-member, nearly all-brass band typical of mid-19th century ensembles, it has evolved since into a slightly larger organization of standard, modern concert band instrumentation. New Hampshire Governor Nathaniel Berry established the band as part of the Third New Hampshire Regiment on July 31, 1861, by an executive order.

He died in 1894 at the good age of 97 years.

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