*April, 1861*

**2**

**Maine Joins The War.**

*“It was never my fortune to witness a more dismal, bloody battlefield.”*

*Union General Joseph “Fighting Joe” Hooker - Antietam - 1862*

While the noise from the cannon fire in South Carolina could not be heard as far north as Portland, Maine, news of the war’s first battle would soon arrive there. The news of the war starting was just like the weather along the east coast for most of the day. Both were dark and dreary that 12th day of April in 1861.

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Working in his father’s small boathouse just off of busy Commercial Street, a cobblestone street that sits adjacent to Portland Harbor, seventeen year old William Barton could not help but hear the noise. Pausing from the sanding he was giving to the hull of a medium sized double mast ketch that he and his father were busy repairing, he looked out the large sliding wooden door to see what the commotion was all about. Standing there, he could see several large and excited groups of people running around at the far end of the street. The noises he was hearing came from the excitement that was generated by the screams and cries of the gathering crowd.

Looking back into the boathouse, William saw the growing noise had not caused his father to give it even a moment’s notice. Slowly, and with great detail, his father continued to carefully place the tar soaked strands of hemp between the newly replaced boards in the bow of the boat he was repairing. A recent spring storm had dashed the ketch, as well as a few other boats, against several large rocks sitting in the shallow waters of the harbor. In this case, the ketch’s mooring line had snapped during the high winds, causing the boat to become damaged. William’s father, Jacob Barton, was a third generation boat builder in Portland. His talents for building and repairing small to medium sized boats were well-known along the coast of southern Maine. Local fisherman generally sought him out first when work was needed on their boats as they knew his work was meticulous. He had also earned a reputation as being someone who would often wait for payment to be made for the repairs he had done. Jacob had long ago learned that it often took a few good catches each season for fishermen to be able to feed their families and to then pay their bills. On almost every occasion, when a local fisherman had explained his money problems to Jacob, he had told them to take care of their families first. Because of that, they had remained loyal to the Barton family business when their boats needed repairs. Jacob’s business often thrived due to the compassion he had shown to these fishermen during their difficult times. Like most people, Maine fishermen never forgot who had helped them through their difficult times.

“Pa, ya don’t seem too bothered by all of this hoopin’ and hollerin’, does ya? What do ya think it’s all about?” From near the large opened door, William alternated stares at his father and at the growing size of the excited crowd.

Still focused on his work, Jacob ignored his son’s question until he had finished inserting the length of hemp he had been installing between two boards. Soon finished with that part of the task, he began wiping his hands off with a dirty cloth, one that had seen far better days. Some of the tar came off of his hands easily, but all over his fingers it had caked inside the ever present cracks and blisters that his hands always seemed to have. Both of the old man’s hands were rough and calloused from years of hard work.

“Think its news about the war finally starting?”

Hearing his son’s last comment caused a brief smile to cross over Jacob’s face. “I’m thinking ya likely figured it out!”

Still staring down the street at the excited crowd from where he stood, William hollered over his right shoulder as he headed out to see what the excitement was all about. He didn’t even bother to take off the dirty and stained smock he was wearing. “Pa, I’ll only be a few minutes! I want to see what the fuss is all about. I won’t be long.” Several nearby merchants had also heard the commotion. Now, like William, they also walked to see what the excitement was all about.

Now seated on a small wooden stool as he finished cleaning off his hands, Jacob hadn’t even looked up when his son hollered to him. He had simply nodded his head at his son’s excited words. As he continued to work on cleaning the stubborn residue from his hands, he sat there slowly shaking his head from side to side. They were movements of pain and disgust as he didn’t need a crowd of his neighbors, or his son, to tell him what the excitement was about. He knew the country had just plunged itself into war. “The country is falling apart,” he sadly thought to himself. He also knew what to expect when his only son came back from learning what had happened. He’d hold his son off as long as he could, but he also knew it wouldn’t be forever.

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“Pa, Pa,” William excitedly yelled as he raced back into the large boathouse, “do ya know what’s happened?”

Back to finishing the task he had been working on when his son’s excitement had first interrupted his work, Jacob continued to insert the remaining sections of tar soaked hemp between the new boards he had recently replaced in the ketch. Just as he had done before, he didn’t even bother to look up at his son. This time he chose not to as he didn’t want his son to see the worried look in his eyes. “From the sounds of it, and from the excitement in your voice, I’m guessing some fools have caused us to go to war against each other.” Not looking up had caused him to miss the excitement, and then the look of amazement, that were present in his son’s face.

“How’d ya know that, Pa? Had ya heard the news about the Confederacy attacking Fort Sumter already?”

Again pausing from his work, Jacob looked up from where he still sat on the small round wooden stool. The tone in his voice would reflect the sadness he felt in his heart as it pained him to know that his beloved country had finally fallen apart. War was not something he wanted to occur during his son’s life. “Weren’t hard to figure out, son. Didn’t know where it had happened, but the talk of war seems to have preoccupied everyone’s thinking these days. Sounds like the talk has clouded up a few of their brains as well. Fools that some of those folks in Washington are, and I guess in the South as well, I ain’t surprised by the awful news ya told me. Fort Sumter, huh? Guess them South Carolina folks must have taken an exception to a federal fort sitting there in their harbor. Seems like we could have worked those differences out without having to go to war over it, but I guess I ain’t surprised to hear the news. News of war saddens me greatly. The war is gonna cause some hurtful feelings across this country for many a year, I do believe. Darn fools!” Jacob shook his head again from side to side as he went back to work repairing the damage to the ketch.

Despite taking in what his father had said, and despite hearing the sadness in his father’s voice, William still could not suppress his excitement. It was caused by his thoughts of sharp looking military uniforms, of guns being fired, and of medals being earned for fighting so well in battle. His young and immature thoughts, like those of others who were caught up in the news of the war, were ones that had not been logically thought out. “Pa, I’m thinking of joining up to fight against them Confederate boys! What’d think?”

Jacob had expected to hear his son say those very words, and had only been surprised by how long it had taken for them to be spoken since he had returned from learning the news that war had finally started. These were the same words that so many other mothers and fathers would hear their sons utter across the land this very day. Like so many other parents felt, they were words that now caused him great anguish. “Not now, son, the time ain’t right. I know you’re excited about wanting to do your part and all, but you ain’t old enough yet. I ain’t about to give my only son to a bunch of fools who have already shown the world they’re running around like chickens with their heads cut off. I ain’t giving my permission for ya to go fight in some senseless war, at least not right now I ain’t. Let it play out a bit so we can see if the fools who dun started this fight can get it figured out. Hopefully they can put a peaceful end to it. If not, well . . . . well I guess we’ll have to see then, won’t we? Best ya get back to work for now. Enough said about this fightin’ business for now.”

Jacob’s words had been wisely spoken, but they weren’t the ones William had wanted to hear. Excited at the thought of becoming a soldier, he again tried to press the issue with his father. “Pa, I think . . . .”

Quickly, Jacob interrupted his son. “William, ya heard what I’ve got to say for now. For now, my words, and my position, are the only ones that matter. As I told ya, I’m not about to have my only son fight in someone else’s foolish war; at least not right now I ain’t. We’ll take a look at it again if the war lasts, but right now we’re done talking about it. Get back to work. Clear them crazy thoughts from your head for now.” He had said what he had to say without raising his voice as he knew doing so would likely have pushed his son away from him. For now the matter had been put to rest, but he knew it wouldn’t be long before it was raised again. Silently he prayed for a fast resolution to the insanity that had started only a few hundred miles from his home.

Moving his small stool around so he could get back to work, Jacob continued to hope for a quick end to the nation’s differences. Like many other fathers across the land, both in the North and in the South, he dreaded having to face the day when he would have to give his son permission to head off to war.

The quick resolution that Jacob Barton hoped for would never come. What would come was the day he dreaded. It was a day that came far too fast.

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While the time was not right for William to go to war, Maine, just like all of the other Northern states, heeded President Lincoln’s first call for volunteers to fight against the Confederacy. From Portland to Bangor to Augusta, and across all parts of the state, men from all backgrounds quickly signed up to fight. Soon fishermen, lumberjacks, carpenters, and others would fill the 2nd Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment. It would organize in Bangor, on May 28, 1861, and it would be the first of several Maine regiments to join the Union cause. Thousands of other Maine men would follow them off to war in the coming years.

Other units, like the 2nd Maine Artillery Unit, the 3rd Maine Infantry Regiment, and others were being organized as quickly as possible. In August, 1862, another Maine regiment would also join the cause. That regiment would be called the 20th Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment. The 20th Maine, like the 2nd Maine Artillery Battery, and many others from the eighty thousand plus soldiers Maine sent to war, would all fight at Gettysburg. Some would fight in one of the bloodiest fights of that great battle. That fight would take place on a small hill that for years had been called by many different names. It was a hill that the world would soon come to know as Little Round Top.

*Spring, 1861*

**3**

**Alabama Joins The War.**

*“Sweet home Alabama, Where the skies are so blue, Sweet home Alabama, Lord, I’m coming home to you …”*

*Lyrics to the song ‘Sweet Home Alabama’.*

A good part of what was then the United States, including those states that had, or were in the process of seceding from the Union, had already heard the news of the fall of Fort Sumter by the following morning. For some parts of the country the news had yet to reach them. Depending on where you lived, and depending on whether your support was for either maintaining the Union or for going to war against it, the news you heard was either good or bad. For Washington, D.C., and for other parts of the North, it was bad news. Whatever kind of news it was, it was news that travelled very quickly. For those parts of the country that were removed from telegraph lines, newspapers, trains, and other means of communication, the news of war starting came to you by horseback.

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For several minutes, the horse and its rider had moved quickly across the several large opened fields at a fast gallop as they made their way to the next farm. Their progress had only been briefly interrupted by two wide, but small natural depressions they had come across, and by three small stands of pine trees that separated the fields from each other. Now past their last obstacle, they quickly resumed their fast pace. The farmhouse was soon in sight, and only a short distance away.

Halfway across the last field, the horse’s rider began his cries. “Louis! Louis Hiram Pierce! Where ya be, boy! Where is ya?”

Busy as he worked in the large red painted wooden barn on his parent’s small farm, where he lived with his two brothers and younger sister, Louis Pierce paused from repairing a broken plow blade and walked outside after hearing his name being hollered out. It had been hollered out very loudly, and even from where he had stood inside the barn he could tell the tone of the voice had excitement in it. The sunny bright day was unusually warm even for an early April day in Alabama, and it caused him to shield his eyes with his right hand as he looked to see the rider approaching. He could tell from the sound of the voice that it had been his cousin, Edward Russell, who had hollered out his name, but he still shielded his eyes from the sun as he watched his favorite cousin race across one of the farm’s large open fields. Watching Eddie slap the backside of his horse told him something exciting must have happened.

As Eddie brought his horse to a stop near the small stone well that sat by the side of the farmhouse, Louis was joined by his younger brother, Jesse, and their sister, Margaret. She was a bubbling and happy ten year old girl who was everyone’s favorite in the family. George, the oldest of the four siblings of John and Martha Pierce, was off hunting up dinner in the woods to the south of their farm when their cousin arrived.

Eddie’s mother and Louis’ mother were sisters who had grown up in rural Alabama with their two older brothers. Both of their parents had passed away, and Louis’ mother had inherited the family farm after her brothers had both moved further out west. The two sisters had each raised four children of their own, and had lived barely a mile apart from each other their whole lives. Like two of their sons, Eddie and Louis, they also had been nearly inseparable through life.

Twenty year old Edward Russell was a very different person in life than his younger cousin. He had been named after a distant and now deceased relative, Colonel Gilbert Christian Russell, Sr., who Russell County had been named after. He was as skilled as Louis was in fishing and in hunting, but unlike his cousin he had a need to escape the country life he had been raised in. Unlike his younger cousin, Eddie had never cared too much for book learning, believing it was a waste of time. He liked to spend his time dreaming of an easier way to make a living than by the long hours he put in each day at his family’s farm.

Exhausted from his long ride that morning, Eddie stood catching his breath for a couple of minutes before lowering the wooden water bucket down into the well. The cool water he soon pulled up from the fifty foot hand dug well helped to cool him down considerably. Standing in the shade that a small stand of pine trees afforded him, he slowly brushed the dust from the fields off of his clothes. He had spent the past hour galloping across the countryside telling everyone about the news of the war starting. Now it was time to tell Louis.

“Eddie, ya look as hot as a poor coon gets after it’s been chased by a pack of dogs!” Little Margaret’s observation of her cousin’s heated condition made both Louis and Eddie laugh loudly.

After tossing the tin drinking cup back into the wooden bucket that now sat on the edge of the well, Eddie picked up his young cousin and playfully tossed her up in the air several times. Each toss brought squeals of laughter from the young girl. Finally setting her down, he smiled back at her as he wiped his sweaty forehead with his left sleeve. “Miss Margaret, y’all are getting far too big for me to be doing that much longer! Ya gotta stop growing on me, ya hear?”

Margaret laughed with glee at her cousin’s comment. “I don’t rightly know how to do that, Eddie? How does one stop growing?”

Finished wiping his brow, Eddie continued to smile at his pretty young cousin as he kept on teasing her. “I don’t rightly know the answer to that question, but I’ll find someone who does! Miss Margaret, I need to talk to Louis for a spell. You and Jesse need to give us a few minutes, OK?”

Neither Jesse nor Margaret liked missing out on the exciting news that Eddie had obviously brought with him that morning, but both knew their place in the family. They also knew that sometimes the grown-ups had to talk by themselves. Like many other children in the South, they knew not to question their elders about adult talk as the risk of being disciplined was one they didn’t care to chance. With Jesse’s help, Margaret reluctantly took the reins to Eddie’s horse and led him to the nearby water trough so he could cool down as well.

Waiting until his younger cousins were out of earshot, Eddie excitedly spoke to his cousin. “Louis, have ya heard about it or not?”

Having no idea what Eddie was talking about; Louis asked him what he was referring to. “Heard what, Eddie? Heard that it’s too darn hot already? Heard ya made a fool of yourself at the barn dance last week? Have I heard …. .”

“About the war!”

Stunned by what he heard, Louis stood still for several moments as he quickly realized that the months and months of talk about a possible war starting against the North had finally happened. “Y’all are telling me that we really is fightin’ against the Yankees? I know we’s got our differences ‘bout things, but goin’ to war against each other don’t make no sense to me. We’s all part of the same country, ain’t we?” For several moments, he questioned his cousin about the news of the war. It was not something he ever thought he would see happen.

As quickly as he could, but slightly embellishing on some of the details as he talked, Eddie excitedly told his cousin about the Confederate cannons firing upon Fort Sumter. “I heard the Yankees did some firing back at our shore batteries, but supposedly they didn’t do too much damage. I guess our boys are better shots than their boys are, huh? Heard our boys hit that fort real hard like. Got them Union boys to surrender pretty doggone quick! Not bad, huh? First time we got to fightin’ and we won, not bad, huh?”

Louis stood silent for several more moments as he processed the news Eddie had given to him. A strong supporter of the stand that the Confederate states had taken, he still wondered what breaking away from the Union would mean for the South. Quietly he pondered the answers to his many thoughts. “Have we just taken on a cause we ain’t ready to fight for? How long can we fight the Union army before we go and kill all of our own men off?” These were just a couple of the many thoughts and questions that raced through his now confused mind.

“Well? Ya gonna say something about what I dun told ya, or are ya just gonna stand there as quiet as a church mouse?” Still excited by the news he had delivered, Eddie stood there with a big smile on his face as he waited to hear what Louis had to say.

Eddie’s comments finally snapped Louis out of his thoughts. Soon he joined his cousin in celebrating what the South had finally done. While he too was now excited about the news he had just heard, he still was aware of the many thoughts racing through his mind. Cautiously he exchanged smiles, hugs, and even back-slaps with his older cousin over the Confederacy’s initial success.

Not knowing what had excited their older brother and their cousin, but seeing the two of them hugging each other and laughing out loud, the two young children knew it had to be good news that had been shared between them. Jesse and Margaret quickly join in the fun.

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The loud excited noises had been heard by Louis’ parents as they worked alone in the corn field behind one of their barns. Putting aside their rakes and hoes, they slowly walked towards the laughter and cheers they heard. Like many Southerners, the Pierce family managed their small fifty-two acre farm by themselves. They managed fairly nicely to keep the farm running well and did so without any outside help. A few larger nearby farms that sat east of theirs, and a large plantation that sat three miles to the south, had slaves working in the fields, but none worked the land owned by the Pierce family. They could neither afford to buy or keep slaves, nor did they approve of the practice of keeping men in chains. They had struggled at times to keep the farm running, but they had managed to survive due to their own hard work.

Taking notice of his aunt and uncle as they came to see what the fuss was all about, Eddie respectfully took off his sweat stained hat before greeting them. “Morning, Auntie Martha! Morning, Uncle John! I just brought y’all some great news! We just seized Fort Sumter from the Yankees! Our cannons dun blew big holes in the fort’s walls so the Yankees had no choice but to surrender. Heard they even made the Yankee captain, or whatever rank he was, take down the United States flag and put ours up on the very same flagpole. Good news, huh?”

As the news of the fall of Fort Sumter had stunned so many other folks across the land that day, the news of war breaking out was a shock to the Pierce family as well.

“You sure about this news, Edward?” As John Pierce looked at his nephew for some type of confirmation about the accuracy of the unexpected news, he also held out hope that the news had yet to be confirmed.

“It’s true, Uncle John. Real true! Seen the telegraph message posted outside the very same office this morning myself. The news really got the people in town talkin’ this morning! Ain’t never seen anything like it, that’s fer sure!”

After exchanging brief glances with his wife, John and Martha, as did their children and their nephew, knelt down on the ground close to the well. As they bowed their heads, John asked the Lord for guidance through the turbulent times he sensed would soon sweep across the country.

*“Dear Lord, Please spare our fine country, and all who live here, from the horrors that a war brings with it. While we are now a divided nation, please give all of us the opportunity to prosper, and to co-exist with one another. Almighty God, we pray to you to keep our children safe from harm and illness during such a difficult time. We ask this of you not for ourselves, but for our children. Amen!”*

“Amen.” It was a simultaneous response that was quietly uttered by Martha and all of the children.

After helping his aunt to her feet, Eddie delivered the last piece of news he had heard. “President Davis ordered all of our Confederate states to form up some volunteers to fight against the Yankees. I’m gonna volunteer as soon as I can. Gonna help whip them Yankees, I am! Heard talk last week, even before this here fightin’ begun, that some kind of outfit is gonna be formed over Fort Mitchell way real soon. I’m fixin’ to join ‘em. Ya gonna come with me, Louis?”

Having listened to his father’s prayer, and to the news that an Alabama regiment was being put together to fight the Union army, made the news of the war starting far less exciting to Louis than it had been several minutes earlier. Anxious to support the Confederacy, but none too eager to leave the life he was living, he hesitated before answering his cousin’s question.

Waiting impatiently for several moments for his cousin to answer him, Eddie repeated his question again. “Come on now! I knows ya heard me as I knows ya ain’t deaf. Ya comin’ with me to fight them Yankees, or not?”

Still not sure of what to do, Louis nervously answered his cousin’s question. “I guess I am. I guess I . . . .” The sickening feeling in his stomach, as well as the worried looks that he now saw in his parent’s faces, did not allow him to finish his sentence.

In the matter of few short weeks, Louis and Eddie, as well as many other young men from both the North and the South, would soon experience firsthand the horrors of this terrible war. Some of those young men would experience it for only a brief period of time, while others would see far too much of the senseless war. Their early thoughts of glory and medals would soon be replaced by thoughts of hoping to survive the war for just one more day.