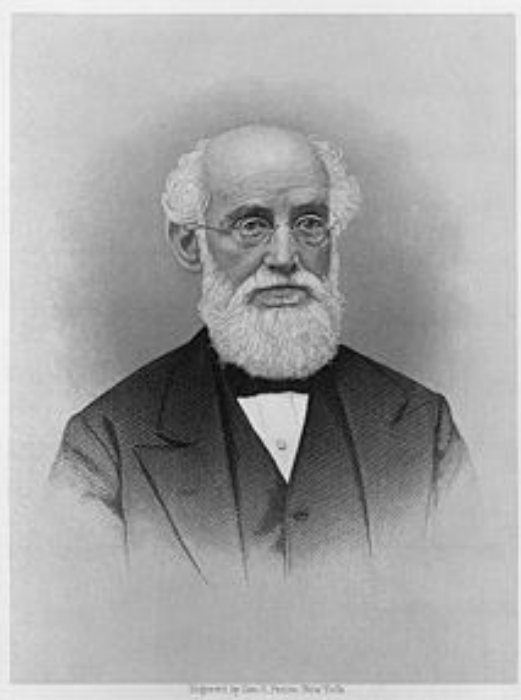


~~ Thompson Family ~~

Civil War Era

The Thompsons were strongly opposed to slavery. They strongly supported Abraham Lincoln and were close personal friends with Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of State, William H Seward, a native of Auburn, NY. Seward was also strongly opposed to slavery.



William H. Seward

Frederick, a resident of New York City, "organized and drilled a large group of Black men, hoping to take them into the service of the U.S." early in the War (Fort Sumter fell in April 1861). At the time, African Americans* were not permitted to join the U.S. Army (although they were welcome in the Navy, which had recruiting difficulties), or the New York State militia (at the start of the war, the New York State militia was much larger than the Union Army). This changed in some states by 1863, and in New York State by 1864, as the need for troops continued to increase; still, the regiments were segregated by race. On July 26, 1861, then-governor Edwin Morgan forbade the addition of African Americans to the New York State militia, so Frederick's efforts were thwarted.



COME AND JOIN US BROTHERS.

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Civil War Regiment

Frederick served as Captain of Company C in the 37th Artillery Regiment of the New York State militia. There is record of this unit marching in Virginia; however, the unit saw no action; as Frederick reported that his unit "...never saw a battle; neither fought, bled or died".

There is record of his unit's departure in the May 30, 1862, issue of the New York Times. There is also record of the unit marching to Richmond late in the fall of 1863. In 1863, Frederick was an avid photographer - but he has written that he found photography incompatible with military service (photography in the 1860's involved heavy cameras and supports, preparation of fragile photographic plates, and handling hazardous chemicals for development). At that time, most militia members served for three-month enlistments - it is believed that Frederick served two enlistments.



Glass Plate - taken by Frederick Ferris Thompson

On August 6, 1864, Frederick sent a well-documented letter to his good friend and right-hand banking expert George F. Baker, asking him to “apply funds in order to have a substitute serve in the War” - there was a procedure for this, and Mr. Baker was performing the execution of this task. As a result of this letter, and Frederick’s above quotation, doubts have been expressed about Frederick’s avoidance of military service but this is far from true.

One of Mr. Lincoln’s biggest problems was funding the war effort. He looked to his Treasury Secretary, Salmon P. Chase, to make this happen. Mr. Chase was close friends with the Thompsons, who were premier New York bankers of that time. Frederick’s father, banking guru John Thompson, presented a multi-point plan for how to accomplish this funding; this included the temporary imposition of an income tax (the country’s first) in 1863 (prior to that, the federal government was funded through fees and tariffs), and the temporary issuance of paper money (greenbacks, which were technically promissory notes, which were all eventually redeemed) in 1863 (prior to this, the federal government only minted coins - primarily gold and silver). In this way, the Thompsons provided critical assistance to the successful prosecution of the war. Eventually, all of John Thompson’s ideas were adopted.



Civil War Photo Frederick Ferris Thompson

**Different words were used in the 1860's*