

Soldiers Club of Needham Record Book  
Wellesley Historical Society

**Repository Identifier**

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**Local Identifier**

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**Name and Location of Repository**

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**Title**

Soldiers Club of Needham Record Book, 1875 – 1891

**Date**

September 1875 to May 1891

**Extent**

1 item. Journal book, 175 x 210 x 12 mm, ruled pages; 40 leaves with handwritten content, 4 blank leaves at end, 44 total leaves; one page detached. Sewn binding, endpapers intact in back, front missing partial endpaper. Red imitation (paper) leather cover over boards. Red spine with gold accent decoration.

**Name of Creator**

Soldiers Club of Needham (Massachusetts)

**Historical Note**

Very little is known about the Soldiers Club of Needham beyond the information contained in this record book. The club formed nearly a decade after the end of the Civil War; it formed just before Wellesley was incorporated as a town separate from Needham in 1881, but the book clearly indicates that at that time the club met in the homes of members who lived in what is now thought of as Wellesley. Initially, meetings were held in private homes in “Wellesley” (at the time likely the area around Wellesley College), Grantville (Wellesley Hills area), and once in a Needham home.

Joseph E. Fiske sheds some light on the club, but he refers to it as the Wellesley Soldiers Club. He notes that the Wellesley Soldiers Club was a successor to a veteran’s organization known as “Abbot Post, Grand Army of the Republic,” which was never fully incorporated, despite having an offer of land for a permanent post. Members of that informal group met, and the Soldiers Club was formally organized September 4, 1875 (Fiske, 68). Fiske notes that meetings were held at Waban Hall and members homes. Evidence suggests that Fiske drew on this manuscript for his information, but it is unclear why he refers to the club as the Wellesley Soldiers Club, rather than the name they gave themselves.

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The mission of the club was “of a social, memorial, and charitable nature ... [for] any man who served in the Army or Navy of the United States during the war of the Rebellion, and who shall be unanimously elected.” Most members were in the Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. The book shows initial membership numbers at approximately 20 people, but accounts show that some events were attended by over 50 people, usually members with their wives.

Meetings generally started off with club business, followed by social activities. The accounts are detailed, but the social part of the meetings followed a general pattern. For example, the March 4, 1876 meeting recounts, “About 10 o’clock the tables were spread with a collation consisting of warm baked beans, crackers, cheese, and hot coffee. After partaking quite heartily, the inevitable cigar was smoked and some of the members indulged in card playing. Some talking business, some nonsense, and a very few nothing. Taps about half past eleven.” Most of the meetings followed this pattern, with variations in meals served, tobacco smoked, and games played. Occasionally the meetings featured musical performances by members or their families, varying from violin and piano duets, to vocals accompanied by piano.

In addition to their regular meetings, the members were involved in funerals, cemetery decoration, and care of widows and orphans for their members and others who died in the Civil War.

By May 1878, the records note meeting in an unspecified “club room.” In addition to the monthly meeting, the club held an annual meeting, starting in 1878, usually in November or December, at Waban Hall.

The record book also includes five pasted clippings. These clippings, usually in the style of “Resolutions,” reflect the business activities of the club during member meetings. It is not clear whether the clippings are from newspapers or from publications printed by the club itself. Some of the clippings note that the information is intended for publication in the Needham *Chronicle*, and Wellesley *Courant* newspapers.

The record book ends in 1891, with several blank pages following the written record. The history of the club is not clear beyond that recorded here. The final entry is dated May 27, 1891, an accounting for a meeting held at the Shattuck Block in Wellesley. During that meeting the club voted to expand membership beyond Civil War veterans, and “voted that all soldiers and saylors [sic] of the town be voted in members of the Club.” The document leaves no indication as to whether the club continued after that date.

### **Scope and Content Note**

This collection comprises one item, the record book of the Soldiers Club of Needham. Records begin September 4, 1875; final entry is May 27, 1891. The journal includes membership lists, treasurer’s reports documenting expenditures and receipts, an organizational constitution with amendments, clippings, and accounts of meetings including social as well as organizational business activities.

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**Index Terms**

Civil War, 1861-1865—Veterans  
Needham (Mass.)  
United States—History—Civil War, 1861-1865  
Wellesley (Mass.)

**Conditions Governing Access**

The record book is available for research purposes by appointment only. Please contact the Wellesley Historical Society for more information.  
info@wellesleyhistoricalsociety.org  
(781) 235-6690

**Physical Access**

The record book is fragile; the binding is strong, but there are a few loose leaves.

**Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use**

Copyright restrictions may apply.

**Languages and Scripts of the Material**

English

**Immediate Source of Acquisition**

Found in the Collection.

**Accruals**

The Historical Society may add materials to this collection in the future; however, no further accruals are currently expected.

**Description**

DACS-compliant Finding Aid created in May 2017 by Alden Ludlow. Processing of this manuscript was made possible through grants from the Wellesley Community Preservation Committee (CPC) and from the Massachusetts State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB).

**Bibliography**

Fiske, Joseph E. *History of the Town of Wellesley Massachusetts*. Boston & Chicago: Pilgrim Press, 1917.

**Location**

Family Archives Room. Clubs and Organizations: A-W: Soldiers Club of Needham