

## Canton's Horatio Bisbee

#8439 page 70, BFC 2000 book - E.J.Bisbee 1956 book page 290 #81619.

### The congressman who twice fought the Civil War.

By Charles Francis



**Horatio Bisbee Jr.**

Bisbee is sometimes referred to as the Congressman who twice fought the Civil War.

Horatio Bisbee Jr. was born in Canton on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1839. His parents were Horatio and Eunice (White) Bisbee. He grew up in Canton, attending local schools, and graduated from Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. In 1861 Bisbee enlisted in the 5<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts as a private. After five months of duty, he was mustered out and returned to Maine where he enlisted in the 9<sup>th</sup> Maine as a captain.

The history of the 9<sup>th</sup> Maine is somewhat unique in that it became the object of the antiwar "copperheads." Copperheads succeeded in persuading a number of the 9<sup>th</sup> Maine enlistees to think twice about going off to war, and some even refused to take their oath to fight for the Union. Others carried their Copperheads sympathies with them as they headed south. Even after the 9<sup>th</sup> reached its first southern encampment outside of Baltimore, a number of men still questioning the rightness of the war. As an officer, Horatio Bisbee had to deal with this discontent. The Discontent almost broke into outright mutiny when the 9<sup>th</sup> Maine was given the worst camp-ground in the Capitol Hill area of Baltimore.

The transportation allotted to the 9<sup>th</sup> in Maryland consisted of cattle cars that had not even been cleaned out. The regiment's first quarters was an old barn known as Soldiers Retreat. It was described as not even fit for hogs. From Soldiers Retreat they were moved to the camp at Capitol Hill. It was low, wet, boggy area, and the only drinking water made the men sick. The 9<sup>th</sup> then traveled to South Carolina by boat. Off Cape Hatteras a gale forced the bulk of the 9<sup>th</sup>

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into the hold of the ship, which was filled with four feet of water. Here they waited, fearing that they were about to end up in the deep.

The 9<sup>th</sup> landed at Hilton Head where they spent the winter of 1861-62 camped in the open. Fevers, colds and chronic bowel complaints were the order of the day.

These, then were the conditions Horatio Bisbee had to deal with as an officer of the 9<sup>th</sup> — political discontent complemented by some of the worst posting any regiment had at the start of service. Nevertheless, the 9<sup>th</sup> persevered and ran up a respectable campaign record. One of the place it fought was in Florida, and because of his experience there, Horatio Bisbee would be drawn to the Fort Lauderdale area.

Bisbee began the practice of law in Fort Lauderdale in 1865. From 1869 to 1873, he was United States Attorney for the northern district of Florida. He also served as Florida Attorney General. In 1877 he was elected to his first term in Congress. When he ran a second time, his election was successfully contested by his opponent, Democrat Jesse Finley. The vote margin had been quite close.

Jesse Finley was a Florida born politician and a lawyer who had served in the confederate Army as a brigadier general. According to some accounts, he was still fighting the War Between the States. Prior to enlisting in the Confederate Army he had been a Confederate circuit judge in Florida. He had also served as mayor of Memphis, Tennessee, and as a presidential elector in 1852. In other words, Finley was an accomplished politician. He had already served in Congress once by contesting another election. Finley and Horatio Bisbee also had a long history of antagonism in northern Florida. They had often been opposing attorneys in the courtroom battles, and it was almost a given that when the two got together, there would be fireworks.

In 1881 Finley and Bisbee again ran against each other for Congress. This time it was Bisbee who successfully contested the election of Finley. In 1883 Bisbee so decisively defeated Finley that the latter stood no possible chance of contesting the formers election. Jessie Finley died in 1904

In 1898 Bisbee took on George Bedell as a law partner. Even though Bisbee was one of the most respected men in Florida and Bisbee & Bedell had a successfully law partnership, Bisbee must have yearned for Maine, or perhaps he simply missed his clashes with Jessie Finley. Whatever the case, shortly after Jessie Finley's death, Horatio Bisbee pulled up roots in Fort Lauderdale and moved back to Oxford County.

Bisbee settled in Dixfield. Here he opened a law office and worked as a semi-retired small town attorney. It must have been a pleasant change after his legal and political battles with his former rival Jessie Finley

Horatio Bisbee, the Congressman who fought the Civil War twice, died in Dixfield in 1916. He is buried in Dixfield's Greenwood Cemetery. Jessie Finley is interred in a similarly named cemetery in Gainesville, Florida. It is Evergreen Cemetery

Horatio Bisbee's lineage is

(Thomas<sup>1</sup>-Elisha<sup>2</sup>-John<sup>3</sup>-Moses<sup>4</sup>-Charles<sup>5</sup>-Elisha<sup>6</sup>-Horatio 7279 & Eunice White)

Page 174 of F.J.Bisbee's 1956, Book.