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The Poughkeepsie Eagle

Following the invasion of the North, in September, 1862, by Confederate General Robert E. Lee, Union forces scrambled to counter the offensive that the South had organized. Lee and the Army of Virginia gradually moved north searching for a decisive victory from which it could circle around Washington and claim victory over the Union. States sent more troops to the front in the hopes it could stifle the Southern Army and continue the war against the Confederacy. New York was one such State, though it came with violent push back from many of its citizens. The year of 1863 would show some of the fiercest action seen in all of the Civil War as well as rioting in response to drafts proclaimed by President Abraham Lincoln, and The Poughkeepsie Eagle would report on all of it.

Once Lee invaded the North, the Union and New York began mustering more troops in order to stave off defeat and fight back against the force threatening Washington, the Capital. One advertisement on September 10, 1862, posted in The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily exclaimed "A Few More good Men WANTED" and the description of the advertisement explained, "The Corcoran's Guard, is now being raised in this city," and, "is to be attached to Gen. Corcoran's Brigade."¹ To add further appeal to those who may respond to the advertisement it claimed that the Brigade was one of the best that's ever entered service and that volunteers should go to McGeen's Monitor Hotel on Main Street to enlist.² There were other advertisements posted in The Eagle that called for troops and all of them were titled differently from each other. One other such announcement on September 15th was titled "To Arms, Ye Brave!" and called for a

¹ "A Few More Good Men WANTED," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (September, 10 1862): 2.

² *Ibid.*

meeting of all citizens and military men of Dutchess County to determine who could enlist in the Dutchess County Regiment.³ A related ad to this one called for those to, “Come forward promptly and join our country’s Protectors,” in order to entice people into volunteering.⁴ Though the number of men the Union Army had in reserve was great, General George McClellan was able to force Lee out of the North with the Army of the Potomac.

The Battle of Antietam happened days after the invasion of the North by Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. General George McClellan met the Southern troops and defeated him as *The Eagle* reported, “It was evident that Gen. McClellan was pressing Lee to the river, so that his army could not much longer sustain itself without aid.”⁵ Dispatches of the battle claimed that rebel losses were twice as many as Union losses and McClellan himself exclaimed, “Our victory was complete. The enemy is driven back into Virginia. Maryland and Pennsylvania are now safe.”⁶ Days after this important victory, that maintained the safety of the Capital, however, an important event in American history trumped all news.

Following the victory against Lee and the Southern forces a proclamation from President Lincoln was posted in *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily*. On September 23rd, an article titled, “Important! Emancipation Proclaimed” was included in the day’s issue and went on to quote the President, stating:

That on the first day of January A.D. 1863, all persons held as slaves within any state or any designated part of a state...shall be thenceforward and forever free and the Executive Government of the United States...will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons or any of them in any efforts they make for their actual freedom.⁷

³ “To Arms, Ye Brave!” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (September 15, 1862): 2.

⁴ “Grand Rally for the Dutchess County Regiment,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (September 15, 1862): 2.

⁵ “Another Great Battle,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (September 18, 1862): 2.

⁶ “The Great Battle,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (September 20, 1862): 2.

⁷ Abraham Lincoln, “Important! Emancipation Proclaimed,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily*. (September 23, 1862): 2.

The proposition of the emancipation of all slaves was put forth by the President and was to be voted on by Congress in the coming months. The Civil War had changed from not just a war to preserve the Union but to a war aimed to abolish slavery within the whole country. However, many of the local population were more concerned with the draft that was to commence, even with the defeat of Lee and his retreat back to Virginia.

On September 24th The Eagle reported that the draft in New York would take place on November 10th and that any volunteer regiments that had not yet been filled to the minimum number were to be consolidated first.⁸ In order to coerce more people to enlist earlier than the draft, the Governor of New York, E.B. Morgan, proclaimed that fifty dollar bounties were to be given to those men who enlisted before September 30th for tenure of three years or until the end of the war.⁹ However, this did not mean that men could not volunteer following September of 1862. There were still advertisements in The Eagle in November, mere days before the draft; one such ad proclaimed “100 Nine Months Men Wanted!” and called for men to, “avoid the draft and get your bounties by joining this company for the 166th Reg’t N.Y.S.V.,” (or the New York State Volunteers).¹⁰ Though, no matter the number of men that the Union was able to muster, victories proved scarce and tensions within the Union Army developed.

On December 18th the Eagle reported the retreat of General Burnside from Fredericksburg in Virginia. However, the retreat was out of caution as the enemies’ pickets were merely yards from the Union troops’. The retreat was done in the dead of night. Burnside would boast that not a single man was lost.¹¹ Though the retreat still resulted in the defeat of the Union

⁸ “New York Items,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (September 24, 1862): 2.

⁹ E.B. Morgan, “Proclamation of Gov. Morgan,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (September 25, 1862): 2.

¹⁰ “100 Nine Months Men Wanted!” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (November 3, 1862): 2.

¹¹ “Retreat of Gen. Burnside,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (December 18, 1862): 2.

troops and forced the army out of Virginia.¹² Though, the Western Campaign seemed to be operating with success and on January 8th The Eagle posted an article titled, “The Great Contest at Vicksburg” as Union troops began to encircle the city on the Mississippi River.¹³ Union troops were massing on the shores opposite Vicksburg; though, with casualties as, “General Sherman’s loss is estimated at from 4,000 to 5,000.”¹⁴ Several ships, however, ran the Vicksburg “blockade” (of batteries and cannon within the city) in order to supply information and supplies to the troops, such as the size of the force of Southern defenders, roughly 60,000.¹⁵ In addition to the encirclement of Vicksburg in the West, the Union Navy began a bombardment of Charleston, South Carolina on March 21st and the start of another campaign by Union forces.¹⁶

Though, on the Eastern Front with the Army of the Potomac, General Burnside formally resigned his command of the Army stating, “The short time that he has directed your movements has not been fruitful of victory, nor any considerable advancement of our lines...”¹⁷ Burnside was replaced with General Joseph Hooker, who in late April began an advance into Virginia and soon, “...attacked the heights of Fredericksburg,” and captured several regiments and batteries of the enemy, garnering his campaign a “Complete Success” as he drove the Southern troops towards Chancellorsville.¹⁸ However, Hooker suffered defeat by Lee’s Army in that town and forced the Army of the Potomac into retreat out of Virginia once again. Lincoln, frustrated at another failure ended his Hooker’s tenure as commanding officer in the Army and promoted General George Meade to that position. Lee, however, also suffered a great loss in Chancellorsville which The Eagle was able to disclose to the public, on May 13th, “Richmond

¹² “Our Defeat at Fredericksburg,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (December 23, 1862): 2.

¹³ “The Great Contest at Vicksburg,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (January 8, 1863): 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ “From Vicksburg: Blockade,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (February 19, 1863): 2.

¹⁶ “Reported Attack on Charleston,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (March 21, 1863): 2.

¹⁷ Ambrose Burnside, “Resignation of Gen. Burnside,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (January 27, 1863): 2.

¹⁸ “Complete Success of Gen. Hooker,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (May 6, 1863): 2.

papers of yesterday announced the death of Stonewall Jackson from the effect of his recent wounds and pneumonia"; wounds that had been received at the victory of Chancellorsville.¹⁹

As action in the East came to a standstill the Western Campaign picked up when General Grant entered the Vicksburg siege. The articles during the war by *The Eagle* tend to exaggerate and it was no different when a story titled, "Capture of Vicksburg" appeared in *The Eagle* on May 25th. The Union had not captured the city; though, *The Eagle* did state, "Gen. Grant has captured Haine's Bluff and the outer works of Vicksburg.... The battle is still raging with every prospect of capturing the entire force of Vicksburg."²⁰ Though, despite this victory by Grant, the siege and bombardment of that city would last for over a month longer. In that time though, Lee had been reforming his forces, preparing for another offensive and *The Eagle* exclaimed, "The enemy is advancing in heavy force," and the second invasion of the North came to fruition.²¹

The same day *The Eagle* reported on the Southern Army's invasion of the North. In response, a proclamation by President Lincoln was issued to the Union. In his address, he called for more troops, stating, "...I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States...do hereby call into service of the United States 100,000 militia."²² In addition to this proclamation by the President, states across the Union began receiving telegrams for mustering. In New York, "The Governor to-day received a telegram from Washington calling for twenty thousand militia men immediately."²³ And without delay, on June 17th, the day following the proclamation, more urgent messages were received, "...from the authorities of Pennsylvania asking for troops," and the Governor of New York was, "...doing everything possible to hurry them forward."²⁴ In the

¹⁹ "Death of Stonewall Jackson," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (May 13, 1863): 2.

²⁰ "Capture of Vicksburg," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (May 25, 1863): 2.

²¹ "Advance of the Rebel Army," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (June 16, 1863): 2.

²² Abraham Lincoln, "Proclamation by the President," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (June 16, 1863): 2.

²³ "20,000 Men Called for From New York," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (June 16, 1863): 2.

²⁴ "Doings at Albany," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (June 17, 1863): 2.

two weeks following the invasion there were minor skirmishes and rumors of Southern movements but finally General Meade and the Union Army would meet General Lee in what would be one of the most famous battles of American history: Gettysburg.

On July 2nd, The Eagle published an article titled “Battle at Hanover Junction” which was in actuality the start to the Battle of Gettysburg. The article stated, “It is believed that the main body of Lee’s army is between Gettysburg and Chambersburg. The indications are that a battle has been fought to-day between Lee and Meade, but to what extent and with what result is unknown,” though the battle was to take place over a period of days.²⁵ The “Great Battle in Pennsylvania,” as published the following day, had become, “A heavy engagement...going on since nine o’clock this morning. Portions of the fight have been very severe and attended with heavy loss.”²⁶ The next day The Eagle published an article describing how, “The enemy are now massing a heavy force on our left...,” and that, “...a severe battle will be fought before dark.”²⁷ Presumably this may be referring to the infamous “Picket’s Charge” which proved to be a fatal error for Lee’s Pennsylvania campaign.

The failed attack on Meade’s troops at Gettysburg proved costly for Lee and The Eagle’s headlines on July 6th reflected the excitement experienced by Northerners. Headlines such as: “Glorious Victory!”; “Lee’s Army Defeated”; and most exaggerated, “Down Goes the Rebellion!” highlighted the day’s issue as it exclaimed, “Meade is harassing Lee with cavalry and following in pursuit,” and, “It is really true that Lee has been totally routed and seeking to escape.”²⁸ The Battle of Gettysburg would become a legendary battle in American history,

²⁵ “Battle of Hanover Junction,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (July 2, 1863): 2.

²⁶ “Great Battle in Pennsylvania,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (July 3, 1863): 2.

²⁷ “The Second Day’s Battle,” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (July 4, 1863): 2.

²⁸ “Glorious Victory!” *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (July 6, 1863): 2.

though the war had not yet been won and Lee was able to escape with what remained of his army.

Days after the victory in Gettysburg, news of an ever succeeding Western Campaign arrived. The Rear Admiral of the Union Navy in the West, D.D. Porter, telegraphed the Secretary of Navy, Gideon Welles, exclaiming, "I have the honor to inform you that Vicksburg has surrendered to the United States forces on the 4th of July."²⁹ Adding to the news of Gettysburg, this victory made it seem as if the Union was poised to win the war with the South. However, though this victory seemed at hand the President still called for a military draft which would see hostile reprisal.

The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily reported on July 14th, days following the victories of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, of resistance to the draft in New York City. It stated, "A large mob collect at the conscripting office...this morning, to prevent the draft being carried on. At this hour they have driven away the conscripting officials, set the building on fire, and the block is now in flames."³⁰ Thus the Great Riot in New York City had begun and draft resisters took to the streets and showed hostility to those trying to carry out the President's proclamation for more troops; though this was not limited to New York City. In Troy, New York, "...three or four hundred men...marched through the streets of Troy and finally stopping in front of the Times Office, which they stoned and gutted, destroying all the property within," was reported by The Eagle on July 16th.³¹ However, that same day military troops were called into N.Y.C. and the Governor proclaimed that:

Riotous proceedings must and shall be put down. The laws of the State of New York must be enforced, its peace and order maintained, and the lives and property of all its citizens protected

²⁹ "More Glorious News," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (July 8, 1863): 2.

³⁰ "Resistance to the Draft in New York," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (July 14, 1863): 2.

³¹ "Resisting the Draft in Troy," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (July 16, 1863): 2.

at any and every hazard. ...I shall use all the power necessary to restore the peace and order of the city.³²

The riots lasted for a few days but showed that the nation was beginning to grow tired of war and tired of giving up their lives in order to go fight against the South. Though, as the riots began to calm down, action in the East and West began to pick up for the Union forces.

The Union Army and Navy began an offensive against Charleston. While the city had been continuously bombarded in the months prior, a new wave of attacks hit the surrounding forts, such as Sumter and Moultrie, and the city itself. The Richmond Whig, as reported through The Eagle, stated that, "The enemy's (Union forces) operations during the past 24 hours have been...continuous bombardment of Fort Sumter...."³³ It was expected that Sumter would fall to Union forces shortly; though, The Richmond Whig continued to say that should Sumter fall it would not necessarily mean the harbor was taken and that the defense of the city would be, "...street by street and house by house...."³⁴ Though the efforts would be futile by the Union, as Sumter and Charleston would remain in possession of the Confederacy until the last days of the war.

Meanwhile in the Western Campaign, the Union took the city of Chattanooga uncontested, as posted in The Eagle on September 10th. However, General Rosecran's forces would be, "...badly beaten and compelled to retreat," following a defeat at Chickamauga.³⁵ Rosecran's forces became besieged at Chattanooga and General Grant, newly appointed to the command of the Western Campaign, rushed to aid him. On November 26th, it was reported that, "We are completely victorious. The enemy is totally routed and driven from every position. Our

³² Horatio Seymour, "Proclamation by Governor Seymour," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (July 16, 1863): 2.

³³ "Highly Important from Charleston," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (August 22, 1863): 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ "Rosecran's Fight," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (September 21, 1863): 2.

loss is very small and the enemies' is heavy in prisoners."³⁶ General Grant exclaimed as well, "The rout of the enemy is most complete," and General Sherman, who would become well known for later contributions began his pursuit of Confederate General Braxton Bragg.³⁷

Following the victory at Chattanooga the Western Campaign seemed to be complete as forces from that area could begin to move into the East and apply further pressure on the Confederacy. Abraham Lincoln proclaimed that, "Reliable information having been received that the insurgent force is retreating from East Tennessee under circumstances...that the Union forces can not hereafter be dislodged from their important position."³⁸ The victories of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, and subsequently East Tennessee, appeared to have prepared the Union for victory over the Confederacy. The Civil War would soon be entering the final phases of the conflict after one of the most memorable years of the war.

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³⁶ "From Chattanooga," *The Poughkeepsie Eagle Daily* (November 26, 1863): 2.

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