

THE
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RIVER
VALLEY
REVIEW

A Journal of Regional Studies

MARIST

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From the Editors

Although no Civil War battles were fought in the Hudson River Valley, the conflict had a profound impact on the region. As the commemorative monuments that dot the downtowns of many communities attest, local men signed up in droves to fight for the Union, while the women they left behind kept home and hearth together and often furnished supplies for their “boys in blue.” Many of those “boys” never returned, their bodies fodder for the rifles and cannons of the Confederacy in places like Port Hudson, Chancellorsville, and Gettysburg.

This issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* examines how the region responded to the nation’s call to arms, and how its soldiers fared in the heat of battle. Through individual stories and regimental accounts, it offers a chilling, firsthand glimpse at America’s deadliest war.

Reed Sparling

Christopher Pryslopski



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The Hudson River Valley Review is anxious to consider essays on all aspects of the Hudson Valley—its intellectual, political, economic, social, and cultural history, its prehistory, architecture, literature, art, and music—as well as essays on the ideas and ideologies of regionalism itself.

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HRVR prefers that essays and other written materials be submitted as two double-spaced typescripts, generally no more than thirty pages long, along with a computer disk with a clear indication of the operating system, the name and version of the word-processing program, and the names of documents on the disk. Illustrations or photographs that are germane to the writing should accompany the hard copy. Otherwise, the submission of visual materials should be cleared with the editors beforehand. Illustrations and photographs are the responsibility of the authors. No materials will be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope is provided. No responsibility is assumed for their loss. An e-mail address should be included whenever possible.

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Since HRVR is interdisciplinary in its approach to the region and to regionalism, it will honor the forms of citation appropriate to a particular discipline, provided these are applied consistently and supply full information. Endnotes rather than footnotes are preferred. In matters of style and form, HRVR follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

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On the cover: *Zouaves Marching down Pennsylvania Avenue* by Unknown Artist, 1861, oil on canvas; West Point Museum Art Collection, United States Military Academy (based on a *New York Illustrated News* woodcut showing the 12th New York State Militia parading on Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C.)



VAN HORNE ELLIS

The colonel of the 124th New York, Ellis had led a colorful life even before the Civil War. A graduate of Columbia University, he was at various times a lawyer, a merchant, a tax commissioner in California, a captain in the Hawaiian Navy, and a commercial steamer captain

The Sons of Friends and Neighbors: Orange County's 56th and 124th Regiments of New York Volunteer Infantry

Michael McAfee

During the Civil War the most important organizational unit was the regiment. The usual state volunteer regiment (unlike the Regular Army regiments organized, equipped, and recruited by the national government) comprised ten companies of 100 men each, commanded by a captain. With the staff of regimental officers and non-commissioned staff officers, as well as an occasional regimental band, the typical Civil War regiment numbered just over 1,000 men. Because of the unprecedented numbers of men needed for the war effort, the recruiting and even equipping of the regiments of state volunteers was largely left to state and local officials. The federal government's bureaucracy was geared to a peacetime establishment of about 16,000 men, and was completely unprepared to deal with the hundreds of thousands of troops required for the war.¹

In the spring of 1861, President Lincoln had called upon the various militias of the states for 75,000 men to defend the national capital. The under-strength militia regiments enlisted volunteers and even took in militia companies from regiments that were not going to war to raise themselves to sufficient numbers to go to combat. For example, one of the companies of Orange County's 19th Regiment of Militia joined the 71st Regiment of Militia from New York City; they fought in the Battle of First Bull Run in July 1861.² By law, however, the militia could only be called into duty by the federal government for ninety days a year; once those ninety days were served, the militia returned home.

Since the war would obviously last for more than ninety days, a new type of soldier was created: the state volunteer in federal service. Originally recruited (in the spring and early summer of 1861) to serve for two years, the terms of service for subsequent regiments was extended to three years. These men were recruited at the local level, often with local politicians using their fame or notoriety to enlist

men with the result that the more men recruited, the higher the rank a recruiter could gain. In most cases, however, a local resident did the actual recruiting among his friends and neighbors. These recruiters normally became the captain and lieutenants of the company raised.

This was an interesting system, harkening back to the colonial militia and the Minute Men of the Revolution. While it could not promise military competence, clearly few would enlist to serve under a neighbor whom they disliked or knew to be basically incompetent. In that sense, at least, it probably did weed out some completely undesirable candidates for officers. It also provided an instant sense of camaraderie for the men and assured that any misdeeds or mishaps would become matters of immediate hometown knowledge, perhaps instilling some modest behavior control.

This sense of community was given eloquent expression by Colonel Peter A. Porter of the Eighth Regiment of New York Heavy Artillery. When he was asked to leave his regiment to run for political office, he responded: "I left home in command of a regiment composed mainly of the sons of friends and neighbors, in a measure committed to my care. I can hardly ask for my discharge, while theirs cannot be granted, and I have a strong desire, if alive, to carry back those whom the chances of time and war shall permit to be 'present' and to 'account' in person for all." Porter was killed leading his regiment at the Battle of Cold Harbor in 1864.³

The soldiers who went to war from the Hudson Valley were in every way typical of other volunteers in the Union Army. In Orange County, two regiments—the 56th and 124th Regiments of Volunteer Infantry—were especially prominent. In both, recruits were drawn from citizens of the county, but many men from adjoining Sullivan and Ulster Counties also joined. With a few notable exceptions, New York's regiments were numbered as they were enlisted. Hence, the 56th was raised and went to war several months before the men of the 124th were recruited.⁴

The 56th was organized in the autumn of 1861, after the Union defeat at Bull Run showed the need for further recruitment. It was organized by Representative Charles H. Van Wyck, whose Congressional district included Orange and Sullivan Counties. Its companies were recruited locally as follows: A, B, C, D, and E at Newburgh; F at Liberty; G at Ellenville; H and L at Callicoon Depot; I and K at Monticello.⁵

The regiment's camp was located along the banks of the Hudson River, south of Newburgh. N.P. Willis, the noted Cornwall author, could see the camp from his library window at Idlewild, and was entranced by it, describing the novel sight of the white tents with the noises of reveille, tattoo, and the regimental

band offering a change from the normal “rural music.” To train the men of the regiment, Van Wyck engaged Augustus Van Horne Ellis, a captain of the 71st New York State Militia who had fought at Bull Run. Ellis was a strict disciplinarian, and he turned the 56th into an efficient, well-drilled team. He had evidently been led to believe that he would become colonel of the regiment, but when the time came, Van Wyck decided to keep that rank for himself and Ellis cut off his connection with the 56th and went his own way.⁶

Van Wyck’s regiment was truly distinctive. First, when it was recruited it was larger than the typical regiment, as it included two troops of cavalry, two batteries of light artillery, and an extra infantry company (L) raised as sharpshooters. These five companies were ultimately detached, leaving ten companies of infantry to serve as the 56th Regiment. In its original organization with the artillery and cavalry companies, it was called the “Tenth Legion.”

The title Legion implies a composite organization that includes more than one branch of service in its organization. At one time in the 1790s, General Anthony Wayne had reorganized the United States Army in the same manner, combing infantry and cavalry within the same unit. The experiment ended with Wayne’s death, but several state militias continued the practice. In New York, it was common for an infantry, or foot regiment, to have a cavalry troop or artillery company as part of its organization. For example, the famed Seventh Regiment had a cavalry troop, a howitzer detachment, and an engineer company. So Van Wyck’s Tenth Legion (named after his own Tenth Congressional District) was within the tradition of the New York State Militia, but its hybrid organization was so alien and unworkable a concept to the federal authorities that its noninfantry companies were detached to serve with different units of the same branch of ser-



CHARLES H. VAN WYCK
Congressman and colonel of the 56th New York, Van Wyck was brevetted a brigadier general at the end of the war to honor his wartime services. He was born in Poughkeepsie in 1824 and died in 1895 after serving as U.S. Senator

vice or as independent batteries of light artillery.

The 56th had another distinguishing feature in its early inception. To show their affiliation with the “Tenth Legion,” the jackets of each enlisted soldier bore a shield-shaped cloth insignia on the left breast. A Roman numeral “10” was cut out of the center of each badge so that the dark blue of the jacket showed through the shield as a large X. The infantry companies of the 56th wore a sky blue shield, the artillery batteries had red shields, the cavalry companies orange shields, and the riflemen of Company L green shields.⁷ Long after the shields were discarded, some men of the 56th continued to wear this distinctive badge in the form of a white X painted on the backsides of their black knapsacks.⁸

Late in the fall of 1861, the regiment went to Washington, D. C., where it joined the Army of the Potomac. The following spring, Van Wyck’s “chicken thieves”—a popular title bestowed upon the regiment after a particular incident—were engaged in the campaign to capture the Confederate capitol of Richmond via the Virginia peninsula. It was during this campaign that the 56th suffered its most severe combat casualties, losing one officer and twenty-six enlisted men. (They either died in action or from their wounds.) Five enlisted men were missing and four officers and thirty-five enlisted men recovered from wounds. In the following three years of the war, the 56th lost thirty-seven more enlisted men in combat. However, after the regiment was moved to the theater of operations in the more tropical climate of North and South Carolina in December 1862, three officers and 213 enlisted men died of disease.⁹

The move to the Carolinas had taken the 56th out of the main theater of operations. It never again saw the intense combat it experienced in the Peninsular Campaigns of 1862, but it did see considerable action throughout the campaigns around Charleston, South Carolina. However, the 56th did miss such “glory” battles as Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and the grinding campaign against Lee in 1864. Those battles would fall to the lot of the other Orange County regiment, the 124th New York Volunteer Infantry, popularly known as the “Orange Blossoms.”

By late spring of 1862, it was obvious that the war was not going well for the Union. The Peninsula Campaign waged by Major General George B. McClellan in a vain attempt to capture Richmond had fizzled, leaving McClellan’s army (and the 56th Regiment) idle in the tidewater channels of eastern Virginia. Now, Washington was being threatened by Confederate armies in the Shenandoah Valley and a new call for volunteer soldiers went out on July 1, 1862. In Orange County, this call was answered when a seven-man committee met at the United States Hotel in Newburgh and recommended the 56th Regiment’s old instruc-

tor, Augustus Van Horne Ellis, for the colonelcy of a regiment to be raised in the county. Ellis's 71st New York State Militia had already been recalled for three months' service in the defenses of Washington, but he was eager to command full-time and serve at the front, so he resigned his militia commission to accept the rank of volunteer colonel.

The recruits for the new regiment were gathered and drilled with sticks and borrowed guns at Camp Wickham in Goshen. Expressing himself succinctly, Ellis stated that he wanted "A regiment of *fighting* men..." However, recruiting was slow. The great rush of patriotism seen in 1861 had slackened as the war's failures and realities had become obvious. Still, the citizen committee that had gathered to garner recruits persevered, and by the end of August Colonel Ellis had a regiment gathered from throughout Orange County. Company A was made up of

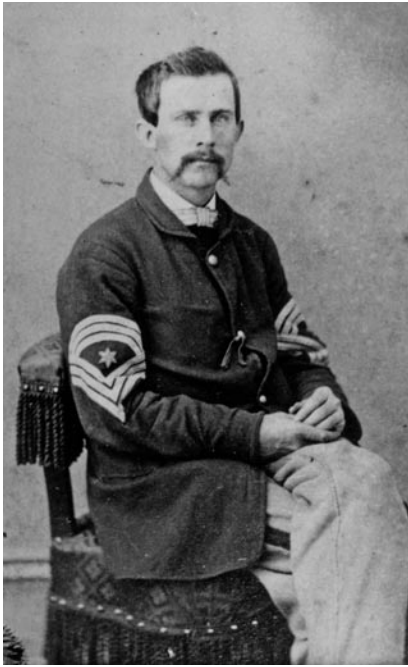


FRANCIS A. BENEDICT

Benedict enlisted in Company D of the 14th in Goshen. He was killed at the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863

men from nearly every town in the county. Company B was recruited largely in Goshen. Company C was called the Cornwall company. Company D was recruited and organized in Warwick. Company E had men from Mount Hope, Wallkill, Crawford, and Newburgh. Company F came largely from Port Jervis. Company G came from Newburgh, Blooming Grove, New Windsor, Monroe, and Chester. Company H was raised in Montgomery. Company I was from Newburgh, while Company K's men came from Newburgh, Middletown, and Goshen.¹⁰ There was no J Company in these volunteer regiments, supposedly because there was such a similarity between a script I and J that the latter was skipped to avoid paperwork confusion.

On August 26, 1862, the new regiment, christened "The American Guard" by Ellis (the same name as the 71st New York State Militia), received a stand of colors from the "ladies of Orange County." Upon accepting them, Ellis vowed



MOSES P. ROSS

Ross became the chief bugler of the 124th, and was at Ellis's side when he was killed. He wears the distinctive orange ribbon of the "Orange Blossoms" in the buttonhole second from the top of his sack coat

that, "If you never again see these colors, you will never again see those who bore them from you."¹¹ His words were partially prophetic, for while the tattered flags were returned for replacement, many of those who carried them never came home. On September 6, the regiment departed Goshen for the national capital, where they were attached to the Third Corps of the Army of the Potomac. From then until June 1865, the 124th served through all of the army's battles and all of the vicissitudes of its camps and campaigns. More so than the 56th, the men of Ellis's regiment saw nearly constant battle. While they were essentially observers of the debacle at Fredericksburg, Virginia, in December 1862, thereafter they found themselves on the front line of battle. But it was in their first two battles that Ellis and his men met what was perhaps their greatest trial as soldiers.

The Battle of Chancellorsville, Virginia, in May 1863, was the first for the 124th, and they performed well, losing fifty-seven officers and men killed in combat or mortally wounded—the greatest number of casualties they suffered in any single battle. It was a true test by combat, and it was at Chancellorsville, after Ellis exhorted his men forward, calling them his "Orange Blossoms," that they became well-known by that new nickname and began wearing strips of orange cloth tied in their buttonholes to identify themselves. Shortly after, Robert E. Lee's victorious Army of Northern Virginia invaded the North for a second time, his route eventually bringing him to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. At Gettysburg, the "Orange Blossoms" again proved their mettle but suffered significant casualties.

On July 2, 1863, after the Union Army had been driven from the fields north of Gettysburg, the Third Corps was deployed at the southern end of the Union lines. The 124th was positioned to support a New York artillery battery at what is now known as Devil's Den, a rocky outcropping that remains one of Gettysburg's

most prominent landmarks. There the Confederates attacked in superior numbers in an attempt to outflank the Union forces and gain control of high ground at the end of the Union lines—hills named Big and Little Round Tops. The 124th and its supporting regiments were in their way.

As the 124th watched the approaching mass of Confederates, Ellis was fully aware that he must strive to hold his position and inflict as many casualties as he could. Keeping his eager men in check, Ellis withheld fire until the enemy was within effective range, and then the 124th delivered a staggering volley. As the Confederates continued to advance despite the fire of the “Orange Blossoms,” Major James Cromwell mounted his horse, saying, “The men must see us today.” With a nod of approval from Ellis, he then led a desperate charge into the advancing Confederates. Cromwell was shot dead and many “Orange Blossoms” fell among the rocky fields, but the enemy hesitated in its advance, giving the Union army time to reinforce its left flank and ultimately hold the line behind the 124th at the Round Tops. Among the casualties, however, was Ellis himself. He was shot dead, falling from his horse while calling upon his soldiers to hold their position as long as possible. For forty minutes his men and their comrades in the adjoining regiments had held back an entire corps, helping to save the day for the Union army.

The 124th continued to fight in the Army of the Potomac for nearly two more years. In the process, five of its members earned Medals of Honor for acts of bravery. In June 1865, the regiment returned to New York, arriving at Newburgh aboard the *Mary Powell*, where they were greeted by their jubilant fellow citizens of Orange County.

The 56th remained on duty in South Carolina for several months more, not mustering out until October 1865. Despite the fact that it had not been so heavily engaged in battle as the 124th,



**THE SECOND NATIONAL COLOR
OF THE “ORANGE BLOSSOMS”**

This flag, or color, was presented to the regiment by “The Ladies of Orange” in March 1864. Photographed a year later, it shows the ravages of combat after the 124th returned home for the final time

the men of the 56th had suffered equally. The regiment lost sixty-four men dead or mortally wounded, as well as 216 men to disease, for a total of 280 casualties. Despite its greater combat deaths (148), the 124th suffered fewer fatalities from disease (93), giving it a total of 241 deaths. In these two regiments alone, 521 “sons of friends and neighbors”—as well as husbands, fathers, and brothers—perished in the war.¹² Countless more were left with permanent scars from the fratricidal conflict. Orange County had done its duty and suffered the consequences. In the process, it regiments left an immortal story as part of the history of the Hudson River Valley.

Notes

Both the 56th and 124th Regiments were chronicled in regimental histories written by members of their respective regiments. *A Condensed History of the 56th Regiment New York Veteran Volunteer Infantry*, was compiled by Joel C. Fiske and William H.D. Blake, published by the Newburgh Journal Printing House and Book Bindery in 1906. The *History of the One Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Regiment, N. Y. S. V.*, was written by Charles H. Weygant, and was published in 1877 by the same Journal Printing House. Both are invaluable in researching the history and foibles of these two regiments.

1. See *They Fought for the Union*, by Dr. Francis A. Lord, The Stackpole Company, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (1960), for a complete history of the recruiting, composition, and organization of the Union Army in the Civil War.
2. *New York in the War of the Rebellion, 1861 to 1865*, compiled by Frederick Phisterer, D. B. Lyon Company, State Printers (Albany, 1912), 691.
3. *The Honors of the Empire State in the War of the Rebellion*, by Thomas S. Townsend. A. Lovell & Co. (New York, 1899), 271.
4. Phisterer, 9-46.
5. Op cit., 2471-2472.
6. Fiske & Blake.
7. *The New York Tribune*, 29 October 1861, 5.
8. Original knapsack in the collections of the West Point Museum, Cat. No. 9550.
9. *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion*, by Frederick H. Dyer, Thomas Yoseloff (New York, 1959), Vol. III., 1425.
10. Weygant, 12-34.
11. Op. cit., 30.
12. Dyer, Vol. III, 1425 & 1453.

The *New Paltz Times* Reports the Civil War: Sergeant Rooster Ackert in Cajun Country

Laurence M. Hauptman

“We are now in the land of alligators and I am pleased that we shall, I mean the 156th, do its part in driving the rebels out of the Teche country....”

—Sergeant Charles J. Ackert

Company A, 156th New York State Volunteer
Infantry, 19th Army Corps, Army of the Gulf,
reporting from Berwick, Louisiana, in the
New Paltz Times, May 1, 1863

In recent days, as a result of American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, print and other media journalists have received both praise and criticism for their reporting. A new term—“embedded reporter”—has now entered the lexicon of American English. Some of these war correspondents, such as NBC newsman David Bloom, have made the ultimate sacrifice in covering the American march to Baghdad. Others, such as Fox Network’s Geraldo Rivera, have been censured for providing information about American troop movements. In late 2004, Edward Lee Pitts of the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* was praised *and* criticized for his role in helping an active member of the Tennessee Army National Guard draft a pointed question to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld about the appalling lack of armor on American military vehicles in Iraq.¹

The role of reporters in war has long been a subject for historians. The Civil War was no exception. Much has been written about famous Midwestern reporters such as Sylvanus Cadwalader and Whitelaw Reid; the coterie of fine New York City journalists including Albert D. Richardson, George W. Smalley, and Henry Villard; and the pioneer foreign correspondent of the *London Times*, William Howard Russell. Most previous studies of Civil War journalists have focused on



**Charles J. Ackert, “The Rooster,”
publisher-editor-journalist-soldier from New Paltz**



Mrs. Ackert (Eliza Varick), “Mrs. Publisher”

ACKERT, ELIZA. THE NEW PALTZ TIMES, 1860-1909. TIMES PRINTING OFFICE, NEW PALTZ, NY, 1909. PAMPHLET COLLECTION. HUGUENOT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEW PALTZ, NY.

reporters from major urban areas who were assigned by their editors to cover the horrendous conflict between North and South.² Unlike these studies, the present article focuses on Charles J. Ackert, a publisher-editor-journalist from New Paltz, whose population was slightly more than 2,000 in 1860. Ackert was also a soldier. Nicknamed “The Rooster,” he served as Fifth Sergeant, later Fourth Sergeant, in the Union army from the summer of 1862 to late December 1863.³

Akert’s unique role as a soldier-war correspondent and his openness about the Union’s military leadership and strategy set his reports apart from most other Civil War journalists. Ackert sent his dispatches to his wife, Eliza Varick, marked “Mrs. Publisher.” She then printed them in the *New Paltz Times*. The articles are surprisingly frank about the problems faced by the Union army and its enlisted men, as well as the abilities or incompetence of the military’s high command.

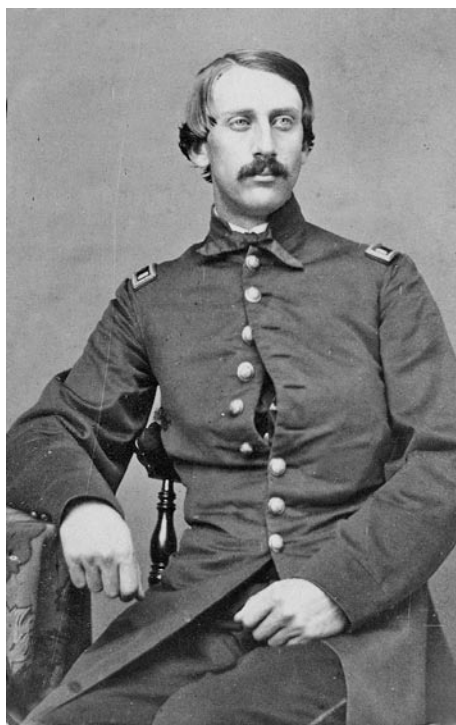
The sergeant’s remarkable coverage of the war occurred largely during the Union army’s campaigns in Louisiana—from New Orleans to Alexandria—where his regiment, the 156th New York State Volunteer Infantry, part of the 19th Corps and popularly known as the “Mountain Legion,” spent eighteen months of its military service.⁴ Ackert was in Company A, serving in General Nathaniel Banks’ Department of the Gulf. Company A was mostly recruited from New Paltz, and a significant number of its soldiers (although not Ackert) were descendants of the Huguenots, French-speaking Protestant refugees.⁵ Ironically, during their tour of duty in 1863 and 1864, these troops spent most of their days in Louisiana’s Cajun Country, whose white inhabitants were largely descendants of French-speaking Catholic refugees.⁶ For much of its military service in Louisiana, the Mountain Legion was largely responsible for patrolling the lower Mississippi and its tributaries, a region in which the Confederates attempted to run the Union blockade.⁷

Akert saw Cajun Country as a strange and exotic world, one that had to be explained in his descriptive columns to his unknowing readers back home. To help them understand, he constantly contrasted the unique climate, flora, and fauna of Louisiana with his Hudson Valley homeland.⁸ For example, he noted that the “slimy water” there was filled with strange creatures—alligators—which he insisted were more numerous than northern tadpoles.⁹ He compared the Mississippi’s flatboats with those that plied the Hudson, or ironclads on southern waters with Ulster County canal boats.¹⁰ The soldier-reporter proudly claimed that the “rebels don’t like our Ulster style fast travelers”—Union gunboats on patrol on the Mississippi.¹¹ He contrasted Baton Rouge with Kingston, telling his readers that the northern city “I think is bigger.”¹² He drew comparisons between the Louisiana sugar plantations along the river with the farms of New Paltz.¹³

Startled by his visit to an immense sugar plantation, he told his readers to imagine “one man owning half the town of New Paltz....”¹⁴ Ackert frequently complained about the exorbitant wartime prices for food and other commodities compared with those back home. He proudly noted that Orange County butter, Ulster County hay and apples, and Irish potatoes from the North were being sold in Union-occupied New Orleans, but the latter were being marketed at “double the price at home.”¹⁵ Ackert was especially impressed by the hard labor performed by ex-slave women and insisted that Northern women did not have it so bad in contrast.¹⁶ In addition, he wrote dispatches about the fear of dying in battle and the ever-present terror of disease and resulting death from malaria, typhoid, and yellow fever, all present in the low-lying bayou world of southern Louisiana.

Along with the entire Mountain Legion, Sergeant Ackert faced Confederate firepower on April 13, 1863 at the Battle of Fort Bisland, near Pattersonville in Louisiana’s Teche (Bayou Teeche) country. During the long siege of Port Hudson that followed, Company A came under attack while successfully guarding an ammunition train outside the Confederate stronghold. In June 1863, the Mountain Legion also participated in two assaults on Brashear City, an important food supply center for the Confederates. After that, until Ackert’s return to New Paltz in February 1864, Company A was largely detailed to picket and patrol duty.¹⁷

The sergeant was “no run-of-the-mill” reporter but an experienced journalist who had a long record of achievement in the publishing business. Ackert was born in Hyde Park, Dutchess County, on May 1, 1830. His father, Samuel, was a mason from Rhinebeck; his mother was Sarah Ann Sleight of Hyde Park. After attending school, he was sent at the age of fourteen to apprentice and learn the trade of printer in the office of the *Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle*. He married Eliza Varick



Sol Hasbrouck

JOSHUA P. LEFEVRE FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM, 1860S. PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, HUGENNOT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEW PALTZ, NY.



Peter Lefevre



Johannes Lefevre

JOSAH P. LEFEVRE FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM, 1860S. PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, HUDSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEW PALTZ, N.Y.

Silvernail at the Congregational Church in Poughkeepsie in 1851. In the next decade, Ackert served in different capacities at several mid-Hudson newspapers: foreman of the *Highland Democrat*; pressman at the *Poughkeepsie Daily Press*; head of the mechanical department at the *Amenia Times*; and editor and publisher of the *American Banner* (later renamed the *Dutchess County Times*) as well as the *American Citizen*, which he moved from Rhinebeck to Pine Plains and renamed the *Pine Plains Herald*.¹⁸

In July 1860, backed by 150 subscribers who paid a one-dollar annual rate, Ackert and his wife established the *New Paltz Times*. In his first editorial on July 6, 1860, he promised to publish a “Family Journal” that would “be devoted to the best interests of all classes, ages and sexes” and would be especially helpful to all farmers. He pledged that his newspaper would be both “interesting and reliable” and that he would take “pains to collect and give to its readers, a concise summary of all the leading incidents that are continually transpiring, so that they will be well informed upon all topics of general and local interest.”¹⁹

Although Ackert was later a leading Ulster County Democrat, he reflected much of the town’s pro-Lincoln Republican sentiments from the time of secession (December 1860–April 1861) through Appomattox. He was quick to blame radi-

cal Southerners and fanatical abolitionists for the war; however, he saw loyalty to Lincoln and the war effort as essential to preserve the Union. He frequently castigated dissenters as disloyal Copperheads.²⁰

After the Civil War, the newspaper was an organ of the Democratic Party. Always active politically, Ackert later became New Paltz town clerk, town supervisor, a New York State assemblyman, and head of the Democratic Party of Ulster County. The success of the Democrat-leaning *New Paltz Times* led Ralph LeFevre to establish a second town newspaper in 1867. The Republican-leaning *New Paltz Independent* soon challenged the Ackerts' paper for readership and advertising in the small community. After Charles J. Ackert's death, his wife continued to publish the newspaper until her death in 1916. Subsequently, the newspaper was merged with the *New Paltz Independent*.²¹

Charles Ackert could have escaped military service—he was exempt because he was a volunteer fireman (and fire commissioner of New Paltz). Nevertheless, he enlisted on August 9, 1862.²² The thirty-two-year-old newspaperman joined up with many of his New Paltz neighbors. In Company A, approximately seventy-five percent of the soldiers were farmers. It also included eleven laborers; six carpenters; four boatmen; two blacksmiths, schoolteachers, and musicians; and one butcher, mechanic, miller, sailor, and teamster. Ackert was the only newspaperman listed in the official roster.²³ Companies A and B were recruited largely by Edmund Eltinge, president of New Paltz's Huguenot Bank. Eltinge's twenty-three-year-old son, Peter, soon received a commission as second lieutenant, serving capably as commander of Company E and later Companies A and B.²⁴

The formation of the Mountain Legion began in the late summer of 1862 at Camp Samson (near Kingston), where training commenced. Soon, the regiment was ferried to Rhinebeck, where it boarded the *Rip Van Winkle* for New York City. In lower Manhattan, the regiment set up temporary quarters in "Park Barracks" (in front of City Hall), and the men began their adjustment to the soldiering life.²⁵ In the November 21, 1862, issue of the *New Paltz Times*, Sergeant Ackert reported that two recruits had contracted measles and that several of the younger soldiers were already suffering from homesickness, "a natural consequence of having not been away from home or visited the city before..."²⁶ After some instruction in the handling and firing of Enfield rifles, the Mountain Legion was sent, with 10,000 other troops, for further instruction to the major recruitment and training camp at Riker's Island.²⁷

On December 3, 1862, the regiment boarded the steamer *M. Sandford* in New York harbor, setting sail for Louisiana. Off the southern tip of Florida, the ship hit Carrysport Reef because of the carelessness of the ship's pilot. The soldiers,

who were already suffering from seasickness, had to evacuate the vessel quickly. Eventually, they made their way to Key West. After a brief stay, the Mountain Legion boarded the government transport *McClellan*, which traversed the Gulf and reached the Mississippi River and New Orleans at Christmas time.²⁸ Ackert described the lower Mississippi–Gulf region: “The waters of the Wallkill will also at any time, be more palatable than what we have had for the past two weeks—warm and dirty ruin water.”²⁹

In his first two columns after he and the regiment arrived in New Orleans, which had been occupied by the Union army since April 1862, the sergeant commented about the wide streets, the unusual cemeteries with their “vaults built of brick or boards, on top of the ground” (because of the city’s constant flooding), its costly churches, and its majestic St. Charles Hotel, which he compared with the Astor Hotel—Manhattan’s finest. Yet, he concluded that the city’s tallest buildings were only three stories high and “in architectural beauty are much inferior to those in New York City.” To Ackert, New Orleans matched up well in one area: Its market buildings were better arranged and cleaner than any found in the North.³⁰ The soldier-reporter chided the city’s residents for ignoring the inscription on Andrew Jackson’s equestrian statue in Jackson Square—“The Union must and shall be preserved.”³¹ His sense of morality was further offended by what he considered to be the immorality of the city’s residents:

Another thing I noticed which would not be tolerated in any northern city or village, is the almost universal desecration of the Sabbath by the citizens. Stores and markets are open, and all kinds of business generally is carried on as openly and with as little concern as any day of the week. All along the levees peddlers with wares of every description were busy in disposing of the same. Also places of amusement were open and seemed to be doing a good business.³²

Although no supporter of abolitionism, Ackert soon expressed outrage, which he conveyed to his readers in New Paltz, about the vestiges of slave markets in the city. His article published on February 13, 1862, revealed his strong feelings: “The ‘signs’ are still up on the different buildings in the city of New Orleans, with the names of those who sold slaves previous to the rebellion. What a comment on a Christian and intelligent people?”³³ Although he fought the war to reunite the nation and to punish the “secesh” [his words], Ackert by 1863 had little tolerance for and was fed up with slavery’s defense by the Southern white planter class, whom he blamed for the war. Moreover, he was especially annoyed at remarks by Southern belles, who often referred to Yankee soldiers as “Lincoln’s rats.”³⁴

Nevertheless, over time Ackert modified his views somewhat about Southerners, especially about the more cooperative merchants of New Orleans, the poor rural folk suffering from the horrors of war, and even some planters themselves. By the time he departed Louisiana for home in 1864, one could clearly see a change in his harsh attitudes: “To deny to the South either refinement or honesty, is contrasted by the number of true gentlemen it has bred, as polished as any the world can produce.”³⁵ Ackert explained his reversal of position, suggesting that Louisianans were no longer seeing the Yankees as Goths or Vandals. Once again he used a Hudson Valley analogy to explain how this transformation had taken place: “They [Louisianans] are looking at Northerners with the wonder of Rip Van Winkle, after his prolonged siesta.”³⁶ His new view was partly conditioned by an invitation to the Perkins’ plantation in Baton Rouge at Christmas time in 1863, where his troops were served excellent food and danced until the wee hours of the morning with Southern belles who were “neatly dressed.”³⁷

Just as he had a change of opinion about white southerners, Ackert’s views about blacks changed considerably—and for the better—while in military service. Even before his departure for Louisiana, he and many other Northern troops viewed blacks with disdain. Unlike certain soldiers in his company who “amused” themselves by playing pranks on blacks, Ackert never did so but simply saw freed slaves as camp entertainers for the troops or needed agricultural laborers for the Union army.³⁸ From his landing in New Orleans and throughout his service in Louisiana, Ackert spent much of his time describing black Louisianans. Coming from a mid-Hudson community with a small percentage of black residents, Ackert commented about New Orleans: “In no city in the Union, for I consider New Orleans, while the soldiers remain ours—can there be found such a mixture of races. Negroes are of every shade, and those who call themselves white look as if they had half a dozen mixtures in them.” The Creole culture of the residents baffled him: “We counted some different races selling oranges, not one out of five could we make understand what we were talking about....”³⁹ Yet, he soon became annoyed that the newly liberated slaves refused to work the plantations, which he felt was a necessity of war, to supplement the Union food supplies.⁴⁰ One month after the Emancipation Proclamation and the formal Union recruitment of black soldiers began, Ackert was startled to see “two Negro regiments armed and equipped the same as the 156th regiment N.Y.S.V.”⁴¹

Later, he reported that blacks made “tolerably good looking soldiers” and that the plan was for them to “do most of the garrison duty south the coming summer.” In stereotypical fashion, Ackert hoped that this plan was true since the ex-slaves “are acclimated and can stand the heat much better than northern soldiers who

have recently arrived here.”⁴² Yet, Ackert was to have an epiphany on May 27, 1863, one that permanently affected him throughout the rest of his life. During the siege of Port Hudson, the 1st (later the 73rd United States Colored Troops) and the 3rd Louisiana Native Guards, comprised of former slaves commanded by white officers, advanced across open ground against the well-fortified position of the 39th Mississippi. Although repulsed, losing more than 400 men, the black troops demonstrated their bravery and commitment to the Union cause.⁴³ Ackert witnessed their heroism, later writing in the *New Paltz Times*: “We have some negro regiments here, and so far have done good fighting. The rebs don’t like the idea of our enlisting negroes to fight and I understand if they take any of them prisoners, will show them no mercy.”⁴⁴

From that time onward, Ackert urged recruitment of blacks. He chided former slaveowners for referring to blacks as “NEGRO BRUTES” and insisted that they made “good soldiers.” He praised Major Charles Bostwick, his acquaintance from Amenia, in Dutchess County, for his willingness to command the 1st Louisiana Engineers (Colored) Regiment.⁴⁵ Although not modern in his views about blacks, after the war Ackert helped Jacob Wynkoop, the first black homeowner in New Paltz, to secure his Civil War pension. (Wynkoop was one of the black soldiers who had fought so bravely at Port Hudson.)⁴⁶

Although reporters during the Civil War faced severe restrictions in their movements and censorship of their writings, Sergeant Ackert appears to have had a free hand. In a war in which the Union military controlled the telegraph lines, and federal officials gave sweeping powers to H.E. Thayer, the Union’s official censor, to restrict even harmless dispatches, Ackert succeeded in freely reporting about, as well as openly criticizing, Union military policies.⁴⁷ Although there was usually a two- to three-week gap between the date of Ackert’s dispatches and their publication in the *New Paltz Times*, the enemy could have easily gathered useful information about General Banks’ command by reading the reporter’s articles. While stationed at Baton Rouge in early April 1863, more than a month before the full Union assault on Port Hudson began, Ackert revealed troop strength and the number of soldiers fit for duty. He indicated that the Union army had 40,000 men and a supply line eight miles long, and that a “great struggle” was “soon to take place up the [Mississippi] river.”⁴⁸ In April and May, he provided his readers with locations of the Army of the Gulf and the type and extent of Union reconnaissance around Port Hudson.⁴⁹ Importantly, he described the capabilities of General Banks’ mounted cavalry, which Ackert insisted could be used to pursue Louisiana and Texas Confederate guerrillas. Well in advance of General Banks’ ill-fated 1864 Red River campaign, the reporter revealed the Union’s future plans.⁵⁰

Ackert was also quite critical of key aspects of military life. On February 6, 1863, he criticized how officers received their commissions as lieutenants or surgeons. Calling it a “Government robbing” process, the sergeant described how these aspiring officers would do anything to secure their commissions, even enlisting “men who could not stand wet feet” or sleep “on damp ground,” knowing full well that they “were not fit for a soldier.”⁵¹ In his articles, he castigated the army brass for its slowness in crushing the enemy; for protecting secessionist planters and merchants who were lying about their newfound loyalty to the Union; for not suppressing the activities of war profiteers and mercenary sutlers with Confederate sympathies; and for allowing cowards to enlist, attracted merely by the sizable military bounties paid to them.⁵² Toward the end of his military service, Ackert expressed his strong displeasure at the military’s practice of allowing substitutes as paid replacements for those conscripted, referring to these new “soldiers” as “poor apologies for men.”⁵³ He and other members of the 156th, many of whom had not been paid in months, were well aware that men were being recruited in Kingston by being promised \$325 for their enlistment, and that the town of New Paltz was scheduled to follow suit.⁵⁴

Ackert criticized the supercilious attitudes of commissioned officers toward enlisted men and noncommissioned officers, as well as the arbitrary restrictions about the distribution of whiskey rations. In February 1863, the man who later became president of the New Paltz Reform Society (whose aim was to advocate temperance), bluntly put his complaints in print:

The commissioned officers of the 156th are on their ‘dig.’ They will not allow an enlisted man to eat, sleep or drink with them, and hardly to speak to them. But such is discipline. I am a little inclined to think if we ever get in an engagement, some of them will be afraid to play ball with us. The ‘catchers,’ you know, are generally ‘played out’ when they receive a ball. But I notice that the officers of the 156th are not the only ones who wish to show their bringing up, or, in other words, how a little office will elevate them. An officer gets intoxicating beverages to drink—so can a colored citizen; but an enlisted man, or ‘contraband,’ is denied the privilege. Now I hold that a ‘little’ of the ‘criter,’ after being exposed to the cold and chilling rains of winter, is just the article to enliven one. But thanks to Gen. Banks, who issued the edict, I think I can hear some of your readers say—it is a ‘good thing.’ Well, I for one don’t see it.⁵⁵

At no time did General Banks or other military officials reprimand Ackert for his reports. The sergeant’s military record was spotless, except for a minor

drinking bout that made him absent from roll call.⁵⁶ Captain Peter LeFevre of H Company of the 156th later wrote about how Ackert and his company faced heavy fire at the Battle of Port Hudson, “lying down in the furrows of the cane field, listening to the music of the bullets as they came whistling along the ground, searching for a head, that might perchance, be a little too high.”⁵⁷ In a letter that appeared in the *New Paltz Times* after the war, LeFevre, wrote that Ackert “always showed himself an active, brave, intelligent sergeant; one who took great pride in doing his duty well and promptly.”⁵⁸

The sergeant understood that his community back home had one overriding concern—the well-being of their sons and neighbors in the war. Much of Ackert’s reporting dealt with the health of the soldiers in the Mountain Legion, and not just in his own Company A. In rather typical fashion, he reported on April 17, 1863: “The health of the regiment is poor indeed, colds, rheumatism and dysentery in all its various stages seem to be prevailing complaints.” In this same report, he noted that his men feared summer duty in the deep South because during that season they were more susceptible to diseases associated with the region. To die off from one of these, he wrote, was “worse than the enemy’s bullet.”⁵⁹

Ackert’s articles were filled with details about the health of his company, regiment, or corps, as well as the quality of care at Union hospital facilities. These concerns were clearly not misguided or exaggerated. Of the nineteen Union soldiers in Company A who perished while in service in Louisiana, only one was killed by the Confederates. Eleven died of either typhoid or dysentery.⁶⁰ Union troops were well aware that 9,000 to 11,000 of the 75,000 to 80,000 residents of New Orleans had perished in the epidemic of 1853, the most devastating yellow fever scourge in American history.⁶¹

Despite new medical facilities and improved public health policies and regulations initiated by General Benjamin Butler in 1862, Union troops in the Mississippi Delta were more affected by disease than by combat. In his first report from New Orleans, Sergeant Ackert mentioned that 300 to 400 soldiers in Banks’ Army of the Gulf had been hospitalized in the main marine hospital in the city, where they were suffering from “the chill and swamp fever, in many cases proving fatal.”⁶² From March through May 1863, half of the Mountain Legion’s nearly 1,000 men, including Ackert, were suffering from dysentery, rheumatism, and typhoid. The soldiers were filling up Union hospital beds from New Orleans to Brashear City. By the end of May, twenty-five of the 120 men in Company A were in military hospitals suffering from various diseases.⁶³ In effect, Ackert was lobbying for improved army medical care by constantly bringing his fellow troops’ major concern to the attention of friends and family on the home front.

New Paltz Times

August 15, 1862

Secession at Home

We have not before mentioned the shameful, yet undeniable fact, that our town is cursed with noisy secessionists. We have some in our village who even go so far as to discourage enlistments. Telling those who are foolish enough to listen to them that they will not get the bounties offered, and c. Now this is all wrong. Our country is in peril, and calling the war “an abolition on,” does not restore peace and harmony. She wants every able-bodied man—those who believe that not one star should be erased from the firmament of the States—to come forward and freely offer his services. And while we are writing this, several yong men are being mustered into service from this town, and while they are gone, shall the contemptible sneaks at home be allowed to breathe forth their venomous anathemas against government? No! We answer, No!

YOUNG MEN OF ULSTER—Now is the time for the young men of New Paltz, Plattekill, Gardiner, Shawangunk, and Rosendale to come forward and help fill up the Company now forming from these towns. The officers are qualified for their respective positions, and there should be no delay. Meetings will be held at the following places, during this coming week:

At John Upright’s Hotel, Gardiner,
on Thursday evening August 20th.

At C. Schoonmakers’s Hotel, New Paltz,
on Thursday evening August 21st.

At Wm. Steen’s Hotel, New Paltz,
on Friday evening August 22nd.

The following speakers are expected to be present:

Hon. T.R. Westbrook; Ja’s G. Graham, Esq.; J.O. Hasbrouk,
and probably, Capt. Thomas A. Glover, of Sickles’ Brigade.

Capt. Griggs, or Lieut’s Lefever and Elting will be in attendance
to receive Recruits.

In camp, May 28, 1863

Mrs. Publisher: The excitement here in this locality for the past four days has been very great. Several fights have taken place between our forces and the rebels outside of their works, but to-day they are contented to remain inside of the fort, which is very strong. They have felled the woods which surrounds it, making a charge upon their ranks almost an impossibility. A great many have been killed on both sides, and the wounded are numerous. I visited one of the hospitals—out in the woods in open air—and I saw a sickening sight, but a soldier soon gets used to it. The surgeons were busy in attending to wounded men, dressing wounds, amputating limbs, &c., and the number of legs and arms that were cut off and thrown under a table, as a butcher would a piece of waste meat, convinced me that war was a horrible as well as a mangling business to engage in at \$13 a month, and paid when they get ready at that, for our regiment has not been paid off since December 31st, Government owing the defenders of the compact for five months. But of all gallant soldiers I saw lying on the ground awaiting their turn for treatment, I heard not a groan! Only regrets that they were for the rest of this campaign deprived of assisting their comrades. Chloroform was administered before a limb was taken off.

May 29

The rebels still hold possession of Port Hudson, but before this reaches you I have no doubt it will be in our possession. We have some negro regiments here, and so far have done good fighting. The rebs don't like the idea of our enlisting negroes to fight, and I understand if they take any of them prisoners, will show them no mercy. The 156th regiment, N.Y.V., has not lost a man yet, and it is doubtful whether they get in the battle—being detailed for other duty. C.J.A.

Ackert graphically pictured medical practices at field hospitals, describing the horrors of surgeons' amputations at Port Hudson:

A great many have been killed on both sides, and the wounded are numerous. I visited one of the hospitals—out in the woods in open air—and I saw a sickening sight, but a soldier soon gets used to it. The surgeons were busy in attending to wounded men, dressing wounds, amputating limbs, &c., and the number of legs and arms that were cut off and thrown under a table, as a butcher would a piece of waste meat, convinced me that war was a horrible as well as a mangling business to engage in at \$13 a month, and paid when they get ready at that, for our regiment has not been paid off since December 31st, Government owing the defenders of the compact for five months. But of all gallant soldiers I saw lying on the ground awaiting their turn for treatment, I heard not a groan! Only regrets that they were for the rest of this campaign deprived of assisting their comrades. Chloroform was administered before a limb was taken off.⁶⁴

Undoubtedly this graphic description of war's casualties and Ackert's reference to the government's failure to pay its long-suffering troops did not generate warm feelings at home about the Union command, the War Department in Washington, or President Lincoln.

Despite the bluntness of Ackert's reports, they never brought retaliation from the army brass. The sergeant used the initials "C.J.A." or "Rooster" at the end of his dispatches; however, both noms de plume could have been easily traced back to him. Instead of being censured for his writings, he actually was promoted and put in charge of General Banks' military newspaper, the *Port Hudson News*, suggesting that his abilities far outweighed concerns about what he was reporting.⁶⁵ The fact that he, along with Lieutenants Peter Eltinge and Mathias Ewen of the 156th, were sent by General Banks on a special recruiting assignment to New York City from September to November 1863 further indicates that the sergeant was well-respected and not out of favor in the 19th Corps of the Department of the Gulf. His work was recognized by General Banks, who recommended him for a commission in the summer of 1863.⁶⁶

When he returned from the recruiting mission, Ackert sincerely believed that he would be mustered into his regiment as a second lieutenant. Consequently, he put his papers in, resigning from Company A as a noncommissioned sergeant. He was granted an honorable discharge.⁶⁷ Much to his regret, he was prevented from mustering back into his regiment as a second lieutenant since the size of the Mountain Legion, which was not up to full strength, did not warrant adding a new commissioned officer.⁶⁸ Despite his complaints and those registered by Lieutenant

Eltinge and Captain LeFevre, he found himself out of military service because of the snafu. Eltinge wrote home that Ackert had obtained an order from General Banks discharging him as a sergeant to “enabel [sic] him to accept a commission but he cannot get mustered.” Despite his repeated appeals, Eltinge noted: “No new second lts’ can be made in regiments below the minimum 840 men.” Eltinge believed that Ackert had no choice but to leave service: “It is certainly unjust to keep him in service as Sergt, and to compel him to act Lieut on Sergt’s pay is also pretty hard therefore I think unless he can yet manage to be mustered in he should be honorably discharged.”⁶⁹ Consequently, Ackert formally notified the assistant adjutant of the Department of the Gulf that he was leaving military service since he couldn’t “be mustered as a second lieutenant.”⁷⁰

By that time, Ackert had lost his taste for Army life, which he insisted was filled with boredom, heavy drinking, and debauchery. His declining enthusiasm for fighting Confederates, as well as health problems that plagued him for the rest of his life, also were factors in his decision to leave his colleagues, go home to his wife, and resume editorship of the *New Paltz Times*.⁷¹ He wrote the last column in his role as soldier-reporter: “If the war should end soon, the country would be full of ‘dead-beats’ and pauper gentry.” He added sadly: “I am thinking that the war, instead of promoting Christianity, is causing more debauchery and criminality in communities than existed before its commencement.”⁷²

The men of Company A threw Ackert a going-away party and gave him an overcoat as a gift of their affection.⁷³ Ackert’s postwar activities as a respected journalist, as a leader of the GAR, and as an elected politician in Ulster County further reflect on his men’s appreciation of the editor’s military service.

Sergeant Ackert’s Civil War reporting brought news about Ulster men back to their families. By being “embedded,” he was providing an immense service to the residents of New Paltz and its surrounding communities. To them his pencil was more important than the Enfield or Sharpe’s rifle on his shoulder. As a trained journalist with a decade of experience and the trust of New Paltz’s residents, he painted canvases of Louisiana—its physical geography, its architecture, and its economy—that Hudson Valley residents could understand. Ahead of his time, he dispelled romantic notions about war, challenged opinions about race held by Northerners, and called into question policies set by President Lincoln, Congress, and the War Department.

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Notes

1. For the Rumsfeld incident, see Howard Kurtz and Thomas E. Ricks, "Reporter Prompted Query to Rumsfeld," *Washington Post*, December 10, 2004, A18. For the censure of Geraldo Rivera, see David Carr, "Pentagon Says Geraldo Rivera Will Be Removed from Iraq," *New York Times*, April 1, 2003, B14. For a one-year overview of the policy, see Verne Gay, "Back from the Front: A Year Later TV's Embedded Reporters Ponder the Merits of How They Covered the 'Drive-by War,'" *Newsday*, March 18, 2004.
2. For the most recent account, see James M. Perry, *A Bohemian Brigade: The Civil War Correspondents—Mostly Rough, Sometimes Ready* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2000). For one of the better reporters covering the Union army, see Sylvanus Cadwalader, *Three Years with Grant as Revealed by War Correspondent Sylvanus Cadwalader*. Benjamin P. Thomas, Ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1955).
3. Charles J. Ackert's Compiled Military Service Record, 156 New York State Volunteer Infantry, Co. A, Office of the U.S. Adjutant General, Records of the U.S. War Department, RG94, National Archives [hereafter cited as NA]; Charles J. Ackert Civil War Pension Record, Invalid Certificate #594513 (N.Y.) and Widow's Certificate #538648 (N.Y.), Civil War Pension Records, NA. Frederick Phisterer, Comp., *New York in the War of the Rebellion, 1861 to 1865*. 3rd ed. (Albany: J. B. Lyon, 1912), V: 3822.
4. For a brief but accurate history of the Mountain Legion, see Seward R. Osborne, *The Saga of the "Mountain Legion" (156th N.Y. Vols.) in the Civil War* (Hightstown, N.J.: Longstreet House, 1994). For the history of the 19th Corps, see Richard B. Irwin, *History of the Nineteenth Army Corps* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893). Other information about the 156th can be found in Will Plank, *Banners and Bugles* (Marlboro, N.Y.: Centennial Press, 1961); however, Plank's book must be used with care since it is simply a Civil War Centennial celebratory account that contains some inaccuracies about the military involvement of Hudson Valley regiments.
5. The 54 New Paltz residents in the 156th were either members of Company A or Company E. Josiah J. Hasbrouck [Town Clerk], Register of "Officers, Soldiers and Seamen" from the Town of New Paltz...in the War of the Rebellion, MSS. in Huguenot Historical Society Library, New Paltz. See also John M. Sherwig, "Who Rallied 'Round the Flag? A Hudson Valley Community and the Civil War," unpublished MSS., Huguenot Historical Society, New Paltz.
6. For Cajun country during the Civil War, see John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1963); Carl A. Brasseaux, *Acadian to Cajun: Transformation of a People, 1803–1877* (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1992), 58–73.
7. See, for example, the *New Paltz Times* [hereafter cited as *NPT*], March 13, 1863, 2.
8. *NPT*, March 20, 1863, 2.
9. *NPT*, May 1, 1863, 2.
10. *NPT*, March 13, 1863, 2; March 20, 1862, 2.
11. *NPT*, March 13, 1862, 2.
12. *NPT*, April 3, 1863, 2.
13. *NPT*, June 5, 1863, 2.
14. *NPT*, March 6, 1863, 2.
15. *NPT*, January 23, 1863, 2. For Ackert's complaints about prices of food items, see *NPT*, April 3, 1863, 2.
16. *NPT*, March 13, 1863, 2.
17. Osborne, *The Saga of the "Mountain Legion,"* 7.
18. Nathaniel B. Sylvester, *History of Ulster County, New York with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1880), 26–27; Alphonso

- T. Clearwater, Ed., *The History of Ulster County, New York* (Kingston, N.Y.: W. J. Van Deusen, 1907), 546; Eliza J. Ackert, *New Paltz Times, 1860–1909* (New Paltz: New Paltz Times, 1909), 2; “Charles J. Ackert,” *Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier*, June 8, 1900, 5 (obituary).
19. *NPT*, July 6, 1860, editorial.
 20. *NPT*, August 14, 1863, 2.
 21. See footnote 18. For Eliza V. Ackert, see “Miss Eliza Silvernail Ackert,” *Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier*, May 14, 1916, 21 (obituary); “Aged Woman Editor Dead in New Paltz,” *Kingston Freeman*, May 11, 1916 (obituary). For the extraordinary life of pioneer editor and publisher Eliza V. Ackert, see Laurence M. Hauptman, “Mrs. Publisher,” *Archives*, forthcoming.
 22. *NPT*, August 15, 1862, 2; September 9, 1862, 2. “Ackert, Charles J.,” 156th New York State Volunteer Infantry Co. A, Abstract of Muster Rolls, Records of the New York State Adjutant General’s Office, New York State Archives, Albany [hereafter cited as NYSA].
 23. Regimental Books, Vol. II, 156th New York State Volunteer Infantry, Company A, Office of the U.S. Adjutant General, Records of the United States War Department, RG94, NA; Josiah J. Hasbrouck, Register of “Officers, Soldiers and Seamen” from the Town of New Paltz....
 24. Edmund Eltinge and his son Peter recruited 54 New Paltz residents for the Mountain Legion. Sherwig, “Who Rallied ‘Round the Flag?..,” 24–26. *NPT*, August 15, 1862. “Eltinge, Peter,” Town Clerk’s Register of Civil War Soldiers, New Paltz, New York; “Eltinge, Peter,” 156th New York State Volunteer Infantry, Co. E, Abstract of Muster Rolls, Records of the New York State Adjutant General’s Office, NYSA.
 25. *NPT*, November 21, 1862, 2; November 28, 2; Osborne, *The Saga of the “Mountain Legion,”* 1–2.
 26. *NPT*, November 21, 1862, 2.
 27. *Ibid.*
 28. *NPT*, December 26, 1862, 2; January 2, 1863, 2; January 16, 1863, 2; Osborne, *The Saga of the “Mountain Legion,”* 1–2.
 29. *NPT*, January 16, 1863, 2.
 30. *NPT*, January 16, 1863, 2; January 23, 1863, 2.
 31. *NPT*, January 23, 1863, 2.
 32. *Ibid.*
 33. *NPT*, February 13, 1863, 2.
 34. *NPT*, February 27, 1863, 2.
 35. *NPT*, January 15, 1864, 2.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. *NPT*, October 10, 1862, 2; March 6, 1863, 2; March 20, 1863, 2; April 3, 1863, 2.
 39. *NPT*, January 23, 1863, 2.
 40. *NPT*, March 20, 1863, 2; April 3, 1863, 2.
 41. *NPT*, February 6, 1863, 2.
 42. *NPT*, April 3, 1863, 2.
 43. For the Battle of Port Hudson, see Edward Cunningham, *The Port Hudson Campaign, 1862–1863* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1963); and Lawrence L. Hewitt, *Port Hudson, Confederate Bastion on the Mississippi* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1987). Hewitt’s work incorrectly minimizes the role of the 10 companies of the 156th New York State Volunteer Infantry during this campaign. Although not directly in the frontal assault on Port Hudson, Ackert’s Company A came under Confederate fire. See *NPT*, July 3, 1863, 2 (Peter LeFevre’s account of the Battle of Port Hudson).

44. *NPT*, June 19, 1863, 2.
45. *NPT*, August 7, 1863, 2.
46. Charles J. Ackert (and Elting Crispell), General Affidavit in support of Jacob Wynkoop's application for a Civil War pension, June 17, 1893, Wynkoop, Jacob (20th U.S.C.T., Co. K), certificate #582,524, Civil War Pension Records, NA. I should like to thank Ellen James of New Paltz, who resides in the Wynkoop house, for pointing out Ackert's relationship to this African American veteran of the Civil War.
47. For press censorship in the Civil War, see David H. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 324–326, 333–334; and especially Menahem Blondheim, *News Over the Wires: The Telegraph and the Flow of Public Information, 1844–1897* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994), 130–140. See also Robert S. Harper, *Lincoln and the Press* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951).
48. *NPT*, April 3, 1863, 2.
49. *NPT*, March 6, 1863, 2; March 13, 1863, 2; April 3, 1863, 2; April 10, 1863, 2; April 17, 1863, 2; April 24, 1863, 2; May 1, 1863, 2; June 5, 1863, 2; June 12, 1863, 2.
50. *NPT*, August 21, 1863, 2.
51. *NPT*, February 6, 1863, 2.
52. *NPT*, January 2, 1863, 2; January 23, 1863, 2; February 6, 1863, 2; February 13, 1863, 2; August 28, 1863, 2; January 22, 1864, 2; February 12, 1864, 2.
53. *NPT*, September 23, 1863, 2. See *NPT*, February 12, 1864, 2; April 3, 1863, 2.
54. Edmund Eltinge to Peter Eltinge, December 22, 1863, January 24, 31, 1864, Eltinge-Lord Collection, Duke University.
55. *NPT*, February 13, 1863, 2. Ackert was president of the New Paltz Reform Club in the 1880s.
56. Ackert, Charles J. Compiled Military Service Record. For the drinking incident, see *NPT*, April 10, 1863, 2.
57. Peter Lefevre letter in *NPT*, July 3, 1863, 2.
58. *NPT*, December 23, 1869, 2.
59. *NPT*, April 17, 1863, 2.
60. See footnote 23.
61. John Duffy, *The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1990), 160. See also his *Sword of Pestilence: The New Orleans Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1853* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1966).
62. *NPT*, January 23, 1863, 2.
63. *NPT*, March 6, 1863, 2; April 17, 1863, 2; May 1, 1863, 2; May 15, 1863, 2.
64. *NPT*, June 19, 1863, 2.
65. For Ackert's publishing of the Port military newspaper at Port Hudson, see *Fishkill Journal Weekly*, July 30, 1863, 2.
66. "Ackert, Charles J.," 156th New York State Volunteer Infantry, Company A, Abstract of Muster Rolls, Records of the New York State Adjutant General's Office, NYSA. *NPT*, September 11, 25, October 28, December 18, 1863 (all on 2).
67. Charles J. Ackert to G. Norman Lieber [Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Gulf], December 10, 1863; Special Order No. 312, December 14, 1863, both found in Ackert's Civil War Pension File.
68. E. D. Townsend [Assistant Adjutant General], General Order No. 182, June 20, 1863. In: U.S. Department of War, *General Orders, 1863, 204–205*.

69. Peter Eltinge to Sister, January 2, 1864. See also Peter Eltinge to Father, January 6, 1864, Eltinge-Lord Correspondence, Duke University.
70. Charles J. Ackert to G. Norman Lieber, December 28, 1863, Charles Ackert's Civil War Pension File.
71. *NPT*, January 15, 1864, 2; *NPT*, February 12, 1864, 2. Charles J. Ackert's Death Certificate, New York State Bureau of Vital Statistics, found in Charles Ackert's Civil War Pension File. Apparently, Charles Ackert returned from war in poor health. See "Mrs. Eliza Silvernail Ackert," *Poughkeepsie Sunday Courier*, May 11, 1916, 21 (obituary).
72. *NPT*, February 12, 1864, 2.
73. See footnote 69. See also Diary of Charles Drake Gee (156th NYS Vols. Infantry Co. A), January 4, 17, 1864, Plattekill Historical Society, Plattekill, New York; Peter LeFevre letter to *NPT*, December 23, 1869.

“but alas! our Country calls” The Formation of the 124th New York State Volunteers, July 1–September 6, 1862

Charles LaRocca

The 124th New York State Volunteers was one of the great fighting regiments of the Civil War. Known by the nickname “Orange Blossoms,” the regiment was comprised of nearly 1,000 Orange County farmers, shopkeepers, laborers, and mechanics. They served as part of the Army of the Potomac, the main Federal army in the field, and fought opposite the finest soldiers the South could send against them, led by the already legendary Robert E. Lee. As part of so mighty an army and against so formidable an opponenet, the 124th forged a reputation in fire and blood. The regiment fought in every major engagement in the East and counted among its number five Medal of Honor recipients. When it marched to Washington’s Headquarters in Newburgh to be mustered out of service at the end of the war, only 130 of the original volunteers were present and still in uniform. They were truly—as the local newspapers of the day called them—“this regiment of heroes.”

By the summer of 1862, the war for the Union was not going well. Many in the North thought it should have long since been over, decided in one big battle. Even after the embarrassing defeat at Bull Run in July 1861, the North quickly regained its balance, calling up thousands more volunteers and bringing its considerable industrial and financial muscle to bear on the war effort. Northerners had every reason to expect that the second summer of war would see the defeat of the Confederate armies and the swift restoration of the Union. Then in a string of spectacular Confederate victories in the Shenandoah Valley—and within sight of Richmond—the Union armies were again humiliated.

It was at last clear that the forces then at hand—state militia regiments, U.S. Regulars, and volunteer regiments from the states—could not reunite the nation.

What was needed was a mighty army of long-term volunteers. Led by New York Governor Edwin D. Morgan, the loyal governors appealed to President Abraham Lincoln for “prompt and vigorous measures,” urging him “that you at once call upon the several states for such numbers of men as may be required to fill up all military organizations now in the field...and to speedily crush the rebellion that still exists in several of the Southern States...”

On July 1, 1862, Lincoln replied to the governors by issuing a call for an additional 300,000 volunteers. He thought that the troops should be “chiefly of infantry” and promised that the following day the War Department would set the quota each state was to provide. Governor Morgan quickly issued a proclamation in response to Lincoln’s message:

The President of the United States has duly called upon the country for an additional force of three hundred thousand volunteers to serve for three years, or the war... This appeal is to the State of New York; it is to each citizen. Let it come to every fireside. Let the glorious example of the Revolutionary period be our emulation. Let each feel that the Commonwealth now counts upon his individual strength and influence to meet the demands of the Government... We cannot doubt that the insurrection is in its death throes; that a mighty blow will end its monstrous existence.... Present happiness and future greatness will be secured by responding to the present call. Let the answer go back to the President and to our brave soldiers in the field, that in New York the patriotic list of the country’s defenders is augmented. It will strengthen the hands of the one, and give hope and encouragement to the other.

New York’s quota in this call was to be 59,705 men. The state was divided into military districts, each with a recruiting committee of prominent citizens appointed by the governor. These committees had the power to select colonels whose job it was to gather the men together at rendezvous places to begin their training; each colonel would receive his commission when his regiment was filled. The 9th Recruiting District, comprising Orange and Sullivan counties, was to raise 1,800 men, 1,200 from Orange County, the remainder from Sullivan.

Towns within each recruiting district were given quotas as well. Newburgh, a prosperous commercial center on the Hudson River, was to provide 285 men to the new regiment, even though numerous volunteers from the city had joined the 56th New York just the year before. Rural Greenville was to contribute twenty-three men from among its farmers and herdsman. Goshen, the county seat, was to send fifty-seven men, while the prosperous farming community of Montgomery

was to raise seventy-six.

Calling for troops and actually getting men to enlist were very different matters. The committee appointed by the governor for the 9th Recruiting District (Tenth Congressional District) faced a daunting task, but they let nothing hamper their efforts. These community leaders were loyal Union men no matter their political party affiliation, and they pitched into the work with vigor. It was noted in the local press that most of the original members of the committee lived in close proximity to one another in an area just south of Newburgh. This was intentional, so the members could be called together quickly to take up the pressing task. Their prosperous homesteads, some of the wealthiest in Orange County, were close to the population center of the county and also close to a neighbor whom they had in mind to lead the new regiment. Meeting in Newburgh on July 11, the committee offered the command to Captain Augustus Van Horne Ellis of the 71st New York State Militia.

The 71st was stationed near Washington, D. C., but Captain Ellis, knowing full well that there was an opportunity to lead one of the new regiments, had taken leave to return home. "Capt. Ellis, of the 71st is still here," reported the *Newburgh Daily Telegram*, "having returned home in order to ascertain what steps are to be taken in regard to the new levy of troops." When the announcement was made that Ellis would lead the new regiment, the press was quick to approve of the appointment. "The Captain has what might be called a fighting reputation: i.e. he is a man who believes that the soldier's business is to do as much damage to the enemy as possible; and those who enlist under him may expect to be immediately taken into active service, and not left to vegetate in the useful but inglorious work of guarding posts remote from the scene of danger." (*Goshen Democrat*, July 17, 1862) There can be little doubt that members of the committee had contacted him well ahead of time, urging him to make himself available, as it was likely he would be offered the command. When it came, Ellis accepted without hesitation. Resigning his commission in the 71st, he immediately made his way to Albany for instructions.

The very next day, Ellis was back in Newburgh to begin the work of recruiting the ten companies, each with a captain, two lieutenants, and over eighty enlisted volunteers, a fact noted with pride in the local press. "Orange and Sullivan Ahead!" was the bold title of the article detailing Ellis's new job:

Col. Ellis has received his appointment—the first issued under the new levee. The Governor was not a little astonished at the promptness of the action. The men who follow Col. Ellis will find something to do. The selection made for a colonel of the new regiment is an excellent one, and

one that will command the confidence of our entire people. Col. Ellis is an energetic man of business, as brave as he is patriotic, a thorough disciplinarian, and by nature and education immanently fitted for the position. Men of Orange and Sullivan! You have already done nobly, more than your share, as men reckon a fair division of burdens, but now do better! Fill up the ranks promptly and well, show to the Union that the Old Tenth is never appealed to in vain when the country is called for duty... (*Newburgh Telegraph*, July 12, 1862)

In this stirring appeal, no mention was made that prior military experience might be a requirement for becoming an officer in the regiment. At least seven men set up recruiting locations in Newburgh and were calling on their friends and neighbors to enlist in their companies; of these would-be leaders, only one had any prior military service. (*Newburgh Telegraph* August 9, 1862)

Ellis was not shy about saying what he required of his company-grade officers: “I want, for subordinate officers, men who will not only be able in pushing forward the organization, but most likely to render efficient services at the front—for those who follow me to the field may rest assured they will never, if I can prevent it, have reason to complain of being kept in the rear. A regiment of men is one thing. A regiment of fighting men is another thing. The country needs, and I want, the latter.”

The newspapers continued to publish articles laudatory of Ellis, but just as the work of recruiting the new regiment was getting underway, a cloud darkened the prospects for a good start. The *Journal*, one of several daily and weekly newspapers in the city of Newburgh, published a report that during the Battle of Bull Run—where Ellis had led a two-gun battery as part of the 71st New York Militia—he had been knocked down by a piece of exploding shell from enemy cannon fire and left for dead by the men under his command. The story seemed to impugn both the behavior of the captain and that of his men in the face of the enemy. It drew an immediate and heated reply:

Mr. Editor:—As you are always willing to do justice to all, I would like to say something in reply to an article in *The Journal* of Saturday, in regard to Capt. A. V. H. Ellis... Such is not true, for there was not a man in the Company who would leave a man under such circumstances; and the statement is not doing justice to the brave boys who always obeyed his orders. When Johnston’s reinforcements were close upon us, at Bull Run, Capt. Ellis was as cool as on a parade, and the boys rallied around him, and came off in excellent order. Ward Beecher. (*Newburgh Telegraph*, July 14, 1862)

This seemed to put to rest any inference that Ellis was lacking in leadership, military skill, or bravery. In fact, the newspapers redoubled their praise of him.

Ellis needed to fill out the field and staff officers in the regiment, which included the positions of lieutenant colonel, major, and adjutant. For his second in command, he chose Francis Marko Cummins, a veteran of the Mexican War. More important than this was the fact that Cummins had also fought in several Civil War battles to the west: Wilson's Creek, Dug Springs, and Shiloh. Here was a soldier who had not only *seen* battle but had *led men* in battle. There were persistent rumors that Cummins was drunk at Shiloh, but Ellis had confidence that his leadership abilities did not come from the bottle. For the position of adjutant, he chose William Silliman of Cornwall. Silliman's abrupt manner did nothing to endear him to the men, who took to referring to him as "Old Silly Man." For the time being, the major's slot remained vacant.

To spur enlistments across the state, Governor Morgan issued a proclamation offering a bounty of fifty dollars for every new volunteer. At the same time, towns and villages in Orange and Sullivan counties began to raise additional funds to help in the recruitment effort. The Town of Montgomery voted a sixty-dollar bounty for each of fifty recruits. The Village of Chester held a rally that raised \$900 in nine minutes for the same purpose. Chester quickly filled its quota of thirty-six men, twenty-five of whom went with Charles D. Wood to join Charles Weygant's Company A; the rest allied themselves with Frederick F. Wood, who (together with the men raised by James Denniston of Blooming Grove) joined Captain Isaac Nicoll's Company G. It is interesting to note that some of these men assumed ranks of captain or lieutenant before they were mustered into the regiment. Wood, for instance, was referred to as a captain while recruiting but started his military career with the 124th New York as the first lieutenant of Company A. Frederick Wood, gathering men as a lieutenant, later signed on as a sergeant in Company G. (*Goshen Democrat*, August 18, 1862)

As the ten companies were filling up, it can be surmised that serious negotiations took place as to who would assume which ranks as these ambitious young men jockeyed for position. "All the towns in the county are waking up," a reporter noted in an article written about the new regiment. (*Newburgh Telegraph*, August 8, 1862) Newburgh took the lead, raising through pledges well over \$10,000. The names of the donors and the amounts pledged were prominently listed in the newspaper.

This money was an important inducement to enlist. A private in the Union army was paid thirteen dollars per month but, as the men soon found out, the paymaster did not appear at regular intervals. The prospect of leaving one's fam-

ily destitute caused many potential recruits to think twice about enlisting. But the money paid to a volunteer, possibly more than \$100, would at least get his family through the first winter of his absence. William Howell, of Howell's Depot, Orange County, began to keep what he called a "record of military service," in which he detailed the money he received for enlisting: "September 2nd, \$50 state bounty, September 4th, \$10 from the town, September 5th, \$25 from the U states." (Had Howell been a resident of Montgomery, his town bounty would have been fifty dollars more.)

During the first week of August 1862, the *Goshen Democrat* reported that men were arriving in the village every day, much more rapidly than had been the case the previous year when the 56th New York was being recruited from the same two counties. This optimistic appraisal was tempered with an admonishment that there were plenty of able-bodied men in the area not willing to step forward to defend the republic:

In some sections of the County, however, we hear from the people who do not appear to be sufficiently awake to the vast importance of having our Regiment filled up at once. It appears to us that supine ness at such a time as this, when our country is menaced by bitter and barbarous enemies, and when her noble defenders now in the field, are calling to us for reinforcements, is wicked and criminal in the highest degree. Do those who look on the mighty struggle in which we are engaged, with so much apparent unconcern, realize what is at stake, or that the future peace, prosperity, and happiness of the present as well as succeeding generations is seriously jeopardized thereby? The simple declaration that our liberties,—the Union itself is in imminent peril, should be potent enough to rouse the veriest sluggard, and fire the heart that has never before throbbled with a single patriotic impulse. Our liberties were won by the sword, in the hands of men who allowed no considerations whatever to intervene to prevent the accomplishment of the object they had in view, and by the same agency and in a like determined spirit, must we all labor now, to preserve them. Shall it not be done? (*Goshen Democrat*, August 7, 1862)

Talk of rousing the "sluggards" missed the point: hundreds of thousands of Union soldiers were presently under arms, yet the war went on. Casualty figures from regiments like the 18th New York, 36th New York, and 56th New York—which drew men from the area—were published in the newspapers for all to see. One had only to read the long lists of names (many of friends or relatives) to understand that things were not going well.

It was not just the men who were killed outright that depressed the fighting spirit of the North. The rolls of the wounded filled columns in the newspapers. These often listed the nature of the wound, detailing a body part sacrificed, and for what? Union generals seemed unable to win a single battle while the Rebels were led to victory after victory. Clearly, local men were fully aware of what was at stake and were neither supine nor unconcerned. What was also clear to them was that inept generals were leading brave men to their deaths. Further, some agreed that the South had every right to leave the Union, for where did the Constitution prevent a sovereign state from doing just that? The legal issues aside, many in the North felt the South, with its backward institution of slavery, was an embarrassment. They saw the hypocrisy of insisting on the freedoms guaranteed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution on one hand and enslavement based upon race on the other.

And then there were the local Peace Democrats, known as Copperheads, who opposed the war for a host of reasons, ranging from racist fear that the freed slaves would swarm North, taking jobs and mixing in white society, to a virulent hatred of the Lincoln administration and all things Republican.

Even as the 124th New York was forming, law-enforcement authorities were moving against those in Orange County who opposed the war. Citing an order issued by President Lincoln, Constable William A. Cooley of Cornwall arrested Dr. W.F.C. Beattie and John E. Ryder, both of whom “opposed enlistments and otherwise manifested their treasonable sentiments.” It was reported that the two men, held in Cornwall, would be delivered to the United States Marshall in New York City. (*Goshen Democrat*, August 14, 1862)

Opposition to the war was hardly confined to Cornwall. Middletown was home to two decidedly antiwar, anti-Republican newspapers. The first was the *Banner of Liberty*, whose masthead proclaimed “An Independent National Newspaper, Advocating Civil and Religious Freedom, the Constitution and the Union, and Exposing Priestcraft and all its Cognate Isms.” The last part reflected an anti-Catholic, nativist sentiment sometimes associated with the early Republicans, a party regularly reviled in the pages of editor G.J. Beebe’s popular newspaper. It was widely believed that Beebe closed his paper in September 1861 to prevent its being suppressed by the administration he hated and to avoid possible arrest. A second antiwar paper soon took up the cause of the Copperheads. *The Mercury* was far more virulent in its attacks on the administration and its policy of emancipation. Both papers played to a nascent racism all too prevalent in Orange County, urging readers to oppose the war, the Lincoln administration, the draft, volunteering, and anything else that might support the war. It was said

that soldiers home on leave were attacked in the streets of Middletown if they dared to wear their uniforms in public. John Hasbrouck, editor of the pro-war *Middletown Whig Press*, was himself caned for his editorial attacks on the antiwar element.

Into this hotbed came Col. Ellis and members of the recruiting committee seeking volunteers. On Saturday evening, August 7, Gothic Hall in Middletown was packed to capacity, with an overflow crowd spilling out into the streets. Local Union men joined Ellis and Lt. Col. Cummins, who made patriotic appeals to the assembled crowd inside and outside the hall. Their efforts met with approval, but they were upstaged by War of 1812 veteran Moses H. Corwin. The old soldier rose dramatically and said that if Col. Ellis needed but one volunteer to complete his regiment, he could count on him to be that thousandth man. The crowd went wild, cheering Corwin and the cause he espoused. It was not recorded how many recruits volunteered that night, but a very large subscription was pledged to encourage volunteering.

The pace of recruitment quickened during the first two weeks of August. "Companies are organizing in all directions," reported the *Newburgh Telegraph*. "We met Col. Ellis this morning and found him in fine spirits. His regiment is progressing finely. By tomorrow night he will have 200 men in camp at Goshen, where they are under drill by Lieut. Cressy."

Col. Ellis needed to find an area of open ground large enough to house, feed, and train his men, and he went to the top of Orange County society to find one. He contacted Bridget McDonell Wickham, widow of General George D. Wickham, a militia officer in the War of 1812. Ellis asked her for permission to use her property in Goshen as the camp for the regiment. She readily agreed, acquiescing to his further request that the camp be named for her late husband. "Accept my thanks for the compliment and best wishes for a speedy success of the Regiment you command, in putting down this unholy rebellion," she wrote the colonel.

The men recruiting in Newburgh were having such success that a company under Charles Weygant was full and ready to report to Goshen with five sergeants, eight corporals, two buglers, two musicians, and eighty-three privates. However, before his company could even get settled in Goshen, five of Weygant's privates deserted. (Descriptive Muster Book of the One Hundred and Twenty Fourth Regiment N. Y. Vols., National Archives) A second company was forming in the county seat itself and a third in Cornwall would be full in a matter of days. Now it became a race to get the men to Goshen as soon as possible. The first company to be enrolled would be designated Company A, the second Company B, and so on. This established seniority for promotion when vacancies occurred among the

field grade officers (major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel) and also established position in the line of battle. Companies were placed with a senior company next to a junior company. Company A was given the position of honor on the right flank, B on the left flank, and C in the center with the colors. The rest of the companies—D through K—would be positioned based on the seniority of their captains, no two junior captains next to each other. As very few officers of the 124th had any military experience whatsoever, and because the ten company commanding officers were mustered within a few days of each other, the seniority issue was really one of form rather than substance.

Ellis set up his headquarters in Goshen, giving the village a decidedly martial appearance. At about this time, he started to refer to his burgeoning military unit as the “American Guard,” a tribute paid to his old outfit, the 71st Militia, which also bore that nickname. It is also likely that he did so as a remembrance of his younger brother, Captain Julius Ellis, who was mortally wounded while leading Company F of the 71st at Bull Run. (Frederick Phisterer, *New York in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865* (Albany: D.B. Lyon Company, 1912; 32-33)

“The recruits are a fine body of men, both physically and mentally,” wrote a reporter. “They have a well fitting fine blue cloth frock coat, and a flannel blouse for undress uniform; good under-clothing in abundance is also on hand.” Under the command of the new colonel, who already had quite a reputation as a stern drill master, and a number of company commanders who were now present in Goshen, the men began to learn the rudiments of drill and military discipline. (*Newburgh Telegraph*, July 31, 1862) Since no weapons were available from the state or federal government, the men were drilled using sticks or borrowed civilian weapons. (Charles H. Weygant, *History of the 124 Regiment of New York State Volunteers: The Orange Blossom Regiment, 1877; Newburg: Newburgh Journal Printing House, 1877; 31*)

Provisions had to be made to clothe, feed, and house the recruits massing at the once sleepy county seat. By mid-August, five huge barracks had been erected, each 100 by forty feet in size, with additional smaller outbuildings erected for cooking meals and feeding the men. (*Goshen Democrat* August 14, 1862) A restaurateur from Newburgh named Odell was given the contract to provide meals for the soldiers, one of whom wrote, “We had barrocks to sleep in and straw for beds with bread and milk, boiled rice, and white beans for grub.” (Capt. John Wood Houston, *Short Sketch of the 124th New York Vols.*). While the newspapers reported that “the soldiers are well satisfied with the provisions furnished them,” letters written by the soldiers after they departed the camp for the war contain comments that the army rations they had later were superior to what was fed to

them in Goshen. (*Goshen Democrat*, August 21, 1862) In fact, the food, barracks, and the site itself left much to be desired; when the barracks were later torn down, the townsfolk were relieved to see the eyesores destroyed. The site of Camp Wickham was chosen without any input from local citizens, who could have told Ellis that the drainage and water supply there were not up to sanitary standards of the day. Sickness during the hot August encampment was probably the result of poor sanitary conditions and unhealthy drinking water. (*Goshen Democrat* September 11, 1862)

“A finer body of men, or more orderly and well behaved, could not be got together...Col. Ellis and his officers are untiring in their efforts to have the Regiment ready to leave for the seat of War, at the earliest moment,” reported the *Goshen Democrat* on August 21. If indeed the men were orderly and well-behaved, it was because Ellis sought to instill in his civilians-in-uniform an understanding that a well-disciplined regiment was an effective fighting regiment and that drill had a purpose. The ability to move quickly and efficiently on the battlefield, to load and fire in unison, and to obey without question the orders of the officers meant that they would be able to inflict upon the enemy more punishment than the enemy could inflict upon them. Ellis had learned the importance of discipline in the gold fields of California, as a captain on one of Cornelius Vanderbilt’s steamers, and on the battlefield at Bull Run. Poorly led and poorly trained units had marched off to war with great promise of doing great things, only to dissolve into chaos when pressed by the enemy. Ellis knew that he must forcefully put his men under his command immediately, before they had a chance to develop ideas contrary to his own. He set about doing that as soon as the men began to gather at Goshen.

Ellis tempered his famous profane vocabulary when civilians were around, but an incident that took place a month after the regiment was mustered serves to illustrate his ability to use it to instill fear in his men. Sergeant William Wirt Bailey, of Company K, wrote home to his father: “The Col. sometimes does swear big, that is when he gets mad.” The incident involved Bailey’s friend, Sergeant Daniel Webb (also of Company K), who was serving as the left guide during a battalion drill. Whenever a company moved from a column of four men abreast into the a line of battle, a designated soldier (usually the 2nd sergeant), was to move up quickly to take the left-most position of the company, while the 1st sergeant served as the right guide. Between the two, they aligned the company in a straight front before moving on to another evolution. This movement had to be done correctly by each of the ten companies. Sergeant Bailey readily agreed that the job of the 2nd sergeant was critical. “If the second Sergeant does not guess

the right distance, it will throw the whole Regt. out of mash. I think they have almost as much to do on parade as the Captains.” (Bailey, September 25, 1862) Daniel Webb was not in his proper place when the maneuver was completed, and this brought the wrath of Colonel Ellis down upon him. “The Col. came around and drew his sword as if to strike him and said, ‘I will cut your God dam little head off and then skeddle.’” Bailey remarked that he and Webb’s friends found the incident hilarious and teased him about it later, having a “good laugh” every time one of them related the story. He also remarked that he did not laugh at the time of the incident, for to do so during drill would further inflame the colonel and have his anger directed at him instead of the hapless Sergeant Webb. Later, out of earshot of Ellis, he laughed at how fear caused Webb’s eyes to bulge out like “peeled onions.” (Camp DeKalb, Sunday 21st, Va. OC Historian’s Office).

Private Henry Dill, of Captain Isaac Nicolls’ Company G (sometimes called the “praying company” because of the strong religious tone of some of its members), related another incident demonstrating Ellis’s temper. As Dill told the story, improvising spelling and grammar, “Wee Ware marching Along the other Day and man said that is A Damed purty Looking Regiment.” This mocking tone brought an immediate response from Ellis. The colonel rode right up to the man, who was seated on a wagon and might well have been a teamster in the pay of the government. Ellis pointedly asked if he thought he could do better than the men marching past him. “Yes,” answered the man, “and a Beter son of Bitch of A Cornel to.” This was too much for Ellis, who dismounted and ordered the man off his wagon. Too late realizing that Ellis was in no mood for jokes at his own expense, the driver refused. Ellis reached up and swiftly pulled the man down. He then beat him in front of the regiment, put him under guard, and marched him four miles before releasing him. Private Dill was duly impressed. “I tell you Cornel Eles is A man and Wont Let His Boys Be imposed on.” (Henry Dill to William Blak[e?], November 30, 1862.)

The mocking of new recruits by veteran troops is a time-honored military tradition. Accounts of it can be found in letters home, in the regimental history of the 124th New York, and even in the great novel of the Civil War, *The Red Badge of Courage*. However traditional it was to be teased by soldiers who had actually been in battle, to be laughed at by a seedy wagon driver could not be tolerated. Ellis’s assault on the man demonstrated his absolute unwillingness to have his own competence called into question, but it showed something more: He would not allow his men to be demeaned by anyone. What happened to the wagon driver is a good example of Ellis’s ability to seize dramatic moments to instill elan in his men. It was not the first time he did it, nor would it be the last.

But all this was yet to come. The men gathered in Goshen were still basically civilians, and would continue to be so until Ellis and the other officers could get them away from familiar surroundings to begin their training. "It was very hard for the men to be compelled to remain in camp and many a one stole between the sentinels who were armed with sticks as there were no guns in camp at that time," wrote young Lieutenant John Houston. One evening in late August, as the regiment was formed up for dress parade, the cry of "Fire!" was heard from the direction of the village and flames could be seen from a residence. Without being dismissed, the entire regiment broke ranks and went "helter-skelter across fields for Goshen." Ellis himself had belonged to a fire company in California during the Gold Rush, so there can be little doubt that he was in the lead. Fighting the fire was hot work, and the boys shared a "social glass" with the appreciative townspeople whose homes and property they had rushed to protect. After dark, they all came back to camp "of their own accord," none having to be rounded up. Lieutenant Houston commented that they were in "fair condition," having not imbibed too much while battling the flames. "So you see the discipline of the soldier had its good effect in that early day." (Houston, *Short Sketch of the 124th New York Vols.*)

The men were settling into the routine of camp life. One new recruit, John Z. Drake of Captain Ira Bush's Company F (from Port Jervis), wrote that he had not been feeling well, perhaps another victim of the polluted water. He had been so sick that "I didn't eat nothing but I can eat as much as any of them now. We have Plenty of fun here in Camp. We have got all of our uniforms all but our guns. We are to have miney rifles." (Robert and Megan Simpson, *The Civil War Letters of John Zephaniah Drake*, 1996) This camp rumor proved to be incorrect. By "miney rifles," Private Drake was referring to the modern rifle musket, manufactured at federal arsenals by one of several American subcontractors or imported from Europe. The most common rifle muskets were the American-made Springfield or British Enfield. Due to technological advances in the weapon itself and in the design of the ammunition, Springfields and Enfields were accurate at great distance. Just as important, the bullet packed a far more powerful punch than previous arms issued to American troops. Private Drake would be disappointed to learn that they would not be issued Enfields for many months, but instead would have heavy, awkward "2nd Class Arms."

Recruitment was so successful that it soon became clear that there would be more than enough volunteers to bring the regiment to full strength with just the men signed up so far. Ellis was faced with the problem of what to do with those forming companies that would not be needed. He revoked his order that recruits

for the “American Guard” gathering in Sullivan County report to Goshen and instead ordered that they remain there to form the nucleus of a new regiment to be commanded by one of their own officers.

Within a very short time, Colonel Ellis reported to the adjutant general of New York that he had 928 men enrolled in his new regiment awaiting orders. (*Newburgh Daily Telegraph*, August 14, 1862) When Ellis reported that his regiment was at full strength, it was just a matter of time before they would be officially mustered into federal service and entrained for points south. Every town in Orange County buzzed at the prospect of the emotion and ceremony of that occasion. As nearly 1,000 of its sons, husbands, fathers, and brothers prepared to depart for the great war of the rebellion, the distant, ominous rumblings of historic clashes at Cedar Mountain and the Second Battle of Bull Run reverberated through the land. These Union defeats heightened concern for the fate of the Union and for the safety of the soldiers who now formed the 124th New York.

Some were concerned with more than just the physical safety of the men. On August 19, Hannah C. Johnston sat down to write a letter to her younger brother, Joseph H. Johnston, whom she affectionately called Josey. He had only recently enlisted in Captain William McBirney’s Company E, 124th New York. She intended for him to read the farewell letter and poem that accompanied it one month after his arrival in Washington, D.C. The year before, their brother, Frank Johnston, had volunteered to serve in a Missouri cavalry regiment. What made things all the more difficult was that the Johnston family were Quakers.

Milton, N.Y. August 19th 1862.

My dear brother

It is with a sad heart that I now undertake the task of writing a farewell letter for you to read when you are many miles away from me. My sadness is caused by the thoughts of being so far...but alas! our Country calls for your services in regaining her honor and freedom and we must make the sacrifice, hard though it be to do so. I give you up to the care and protection of that Almighty Preserver who has so mercifully and wonderfully preserved our brother through many and fearful dangers. O do put your trust in him and try to do your duty as he would have you do it. Now my dear brother when you are so far from me will you not at my request try to give your heart to him and make up your mind to serve him with a perfect heart, praying to him every day for assistance that you may be prepared to live or die as it shall please him. Then you will be kept from taking part in the many vices and bad habits which always attend in a greater or less degree, a Camp life. You will probably see many and frequent examples of drunkenness, lying, stealing

perhaps and what is probably most frequent is swearing. O what my beloved brother sounds more sinful and degrading than taking the name of God in vain. He who upholds the whole Universe, by his power must never be spoken of except with greatest reverence. O remember this and if you are tempted at any time to do so or say anything which you know to be wrong, resolve not to do it, and pray silently in your own mind for assistance to keep that resolve. And believe me when I say that you will never be sorry for doing so, even if you live to be an old man. You may be laughed at by wicked persons for not joining with them in their sinfulness but those very persons will think more of you for it and will like you better than they will those who are like them-selves. I am sure of this for I know it by experience. I have been with such persons myself. Never play cards with persons who would play for money or drink. If you want something to pass away the time pleasantly, either read some good book or read of the letters which you receive from home, or try to find some good moral or religious person to talk with, or if none of these suit go alone by yourself and there think of home and friends, and you may always know we are thinking of you, for there will scarcely an hour pass without I think of you. I want you also to go alone and try to think upon religious and good things. Spend much of your time in writing letters home. Write good long ones and give us all the particulars which you know. Since Frank went away you know how anxious we are to hear from him, so you may know how glad we will be always to have letters from you, even if they are short, so that we know you are well and by all means do not neglect one hour to write to me when there has been any fighting, for you know how we will feel until we hear from you. My darling brother I know you have always been very careful about keeping good company, and I trust you will ever continue to be friendly to all but intimate with none but the best of all men. Always avoid getting into petty passions or quarreling with any one. You will not find a man in Camp worth quarreling with, and I hope you will treat them as if you thought so. Have no words with them when angry, this has been a great cause of anxiety with me in having you leave home so young, do not talk to an angry man, but I know that if you are determined to do right whatever cross you have to bear you will by the grace of God most surely succeed. And now closing this with a sweet farewell I earnestly pray God to have you in his keeping, to help you bravely to do your duty, and return you safely to the ever fond embrace of your most loving devoted sister

Hannah C. Johnston.

The war that split the nation also split the Johnston family. The Quaker Meeting to which they belonged could not abide the fact that the brothers had joined to fight, and both Frank and Josey were expelled. Only one was alive at the end of the war to rejoin the Meeting.

In ceremonies repeated throughout the north that late summer of 1862, each regiment prepared for its departure. Families again flooded the camps to make sure that their soldiers had with them all manner of Bibles, images (as photographs were called), extra clothing, preserves, handguns, knives, portable writing desks, toiletries, and other items. Some of these were actually useful or embodied such powerful reminders of home and loved ones that they found a place in the soldier's knapsack. But most, just too heavy or bulky to carry, were discarded along the road on the first march.

Even the advertisements in the local press looked to the needs of the men. One read: "Soldiers! see to your own heath, do not trust to the Army supplies; Cholera, Fever, and Bowel complaint will follow your slightest indiscretion. Holloway's Pills and Ointment should be in every man's knapsack—The British and French troops use no other medicines. Only 25 cents per Box or Pot." (*Goshen Democrat*, September 11, 1862)

Soldiers were making preparations for going off to war in other ways. Under the heading "Marriages" in one local newspaper were listed the following:

Moses Ross, Chief Bugler of the 124th Regt., to Miss E. Vail

Curtis Ackerman, of Co. E, 124th Regt., to Miss Ann Hall

Ezra Hyatt, of Co. D, 124th Regt., to Miss Barbara Fitzgerald.

(*Goshen Democrat*, August 28, 1862)

Private Patrick Leach, of Captain Murray's Company B, either brought a pistol to camp or was presented one by a wellwisher. While handling it, the weapon discharged. The ball passed through a one-inch wallboard and struck the wife of Private John Eckert (also of Company B) while she was talking to her husband inside his barracks. (*Goshen Democrat*, September 11, 1862) The wound was so serious that Private Eckert was furloughed to remain in Goshen to nurse his wife back to health. She recovered sufficiently for his to return to the regiment in time for the Battle of Chancellorsville seven months later. (*Goshen Independent*)

Unlike the enlisted men, officers were expected to provide their own uniforms and weapons. Here was an opportunity for friends and family to present items of real value and significance. The molders of the Washington Iron Works gave 2nd Lieutenant Henry P. Ramsdell, Company C, an engraved sword, sash, and belt. The Ramsdell family owned the steamboats that carried passengers and

freight up and down the Hudson River. The ironworkers who purchased these items wrote in a letter to the young volunteer that they had the highest respect for his willingness to exchange his life of “refinement and luxury” for the rigors of the march and the danger of the battlefield. This feeling was due in no small measure to his “gentlemanly conduct towards us and to the fact that you seemed to take considerable interest in our business.” They had hoped to make the presentation in Newburgh, where Ramsdell resided, but because of the demands placed upon him in Goshen they sent the sword and letter to him in camp. (*Newburgh Telegraph*, September 4, 1862)

On August 24, orders were received setting the 27th as the departure date for the regiment. With so much to do and so little time left before their loved ones departed, a feeling of urgency took hold of the county. However, it was soon learned that the federal government was not ready to arm the soldiers or to provide for their travel and accommodations, as so many other regiments were on the move at the same time. On top of that, the men had not received their advance pay. It was speculated that it would be at least a week after the 27th before the regiment would finally depart. (*Newburgh Telegraph* August 28, 1862)

Still, the general public was under the impression that the regiment would move out on the 27th, so together with the knowledge that there was to be a flag presentation on Tuesday, August 26, a sizeable portion of Orange County made its way to Goshen to be a part of this historic event. The village of Goshen awoke to a flood of visitors. “Somehow the impression had got abroad that a ‘big time’ was to be had in connection with a flag presentation, and at an early hour the people began to pour in to the astonished town... One can imagine what a time the residents had with such a crowd, and no provision made for their reception.” (*Newburgh Telegraph*, August 28, 1862) Every hotel and inn with rooms to let was full before noon, and soon there was no more room in the village even for the horses and carriages used to bring so many wellwishers. The village swelled to several times its permanent population, some estimates running as high as 15,000 people. The presentation of a stand of colors to the regiment would be a solemn occasion indeed, and a great opportunity for Colonel Ellis to demonstrate how well his new recruits had been trained to observe military decorum.

At about three-thirty in the afternoon, the regiment was ordered out for dress parade, a formal exercise they would be required to perform just about every day of their military service. Each company marched out and took its place in line of battle; captains stood at the right of their respective companies, awaiting orders. At Ellis’s command, each company wheeled to the right, forming a column of companies so they could pass in review for the crowd. Known for his martial bear-

ing, the colonel was every inch a soldier. Superbly mounted as always, he watched proudly as his men passed in review. "The troops deported themselves creditably, and their short stay at camp had transformed them into a fine looking body of soldiers, who will certainly do honor to the county from which they hail." (*Whig Press*, September 3, 1862)

With the regiment again drawn up in line of battle, the highlight of the afternoon took place. On a stand stood invited dignitaries awaiting Ellis's signal that he was prepared to receive the colors. First came the obligatory political bombast presented in the form of a patriotic speech by the Honorable Charles H. Winfield, who happened to be running for Congress. When he was done, Winfield handed the national flag to Colonel Ellis on behalf of the Daughters of Orange, a patriotic ladies group that had raised money for its purchase (as well as for a pair of guidons). At Ellis's request, the silk national flag had been made for "service and not for show." It would be carried at the center of the regiment by a color-bearer chosen for his bravery and soldierly demeanor. A color guard of handpicked men would protect the colors at all costs. The guidons were much smaller, silk-embroidered American flags that were carried at the left and right flanks of the regiment by sergeants chosen for the same qualities. With the colors at the center and the guidons on the flanks, the men could always align themselves, even under the most trying circumstances. (*Goshen Democrat*, August 28, 1862)

Ellis received the flag and dramatically held it aloft, saying, "Should the Flag this day presented by the people of loyal Orange, never be permitted to return, the brave boys marching under its broad folds will share its fate; for we have sworn to die rather than that it should be yielded to the enemies of our country!" (*Whig Press*, September 3, 1862) How prophetic these words turned out to be for the colonel himself and for so many others who stood in the ranks that day.

David F. Gedney, Esq., was next to speak, accepting the flag in the name of the Regiment. "His remarks were received with many demonstrations of gratification, and upon its conclusion the assemblage manifested its approbation by cheers and clapping of hands." (*Goshen Democrat*, August 28, 1862) Another newspaper described his speech as "eloquent" but of "some length." (*Whig Press*, September 3, 1862) Next, Miss Charlotte Coulter stepped forward, determined not to be overshadowed by any politician. She made a "grand little speech" and presented the guidons on behalf of the Daughters of Wawayanda.

With all eyes upon him, Colonel Ellis carried the national flag to the center of the regiment, and held it aloft while the men gave their new banner its first salute, "which was done in true Military order with the right hand raised." He then handed it over for safekeeping to Color Bearer Jonas G. Davis, "which was

the signal for a simultaneous outburst of enthusiasm upon the part of the whole Regiment, and all joined in six cheers and a “tiger”—three for the colors and three for the “Daughters of Orange and Wawayanda for the highly valued gift.” Just at that moment, the Middletown Band struck up “The Star Spangled Banner.” “The effect was electrical, and the dense mass of people present, seemed carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment.” (*Goshen Democrat*, August 28, 1862) The official ceremonies completed, the regiment proudly marched and counter-marched to show off its new banner, which “looked very beautiful as it gracefully floated to the breeze.”

The total cost of the national colors and guidons was \$130. The flag was made of the very best oil-boiled silk to regulation size. “The staff is surmounted with a silver spear, and decorated with a crimson cord and tassel. Upon the colors is the inscription, ‘124th Regiment, N.Y.S.V., American Guard.’ On an engraved plate upon the staff is Written ‘Presented to the American Guard, by the Daughters of Orange.’”

The company commanders were then ordered to take charge of their companies. Captain Ira Bush marched his men back to their barracks, where he drew them up in front of the building. Led by Eliza Knight and Maggie Heller, the ladies of Port Jervis (the home of Company F) had raised forty-five dollars to pay for a magnificent sword made by Tiffany and Company of New York. They presented it to Captain Bush in front of his men in a stirring ceremony. (*Whig Press*, September 3, 1862)

The festivities concluded, the officers and men were dismissed to visit with their families. Ellis seized the opportunity to make a quick trip home to New Windsor. There he found awaiting him a group of townspeople led by George Denniston, the town supervisor. In a brief and quiet ceremony, Ellis, too, was presented with a sword. (*Newburgh Telegraph*, September 4, 1862)

Thomas Rodman of Company C sat down to write his parents what he was sure would be his last letter from Camp Wickham. “I am well and in good spirits at present and I hope I may always be the same... This afternoon we have our Flag presented to us. Tell Father I am now acting as orderly Sergeant of my company as to what position I am permanently to hold I cannot say at present but am sure of an office. There is some talk of changing out our Captain. None of our Sergeants or Corporals are yet appointed.” As it turned out, this bit of camp gossip was true: Captain James Cromwell, at that time serving as the commander of Rodman’s company, had been promoted to major six days earlier and would be mustered at that rank the day before their departure from Goshen on September 5. (Phisterer, 3470) William Silliman, serving as adjutant, was promoted to captain of Company

C and was mustered on the same date. (Phisterer, 3475)

The daily routine of camp continued as the regiment awaited orders. Drummers woke the men at five in the morning; they were expected to wash and clean up their quarters in time for roll call at six. Close attention was paid to determine if anyone had deserted during the night. (At times during the war, the problem of desertion in the Army of the Potomac was so great that the roll was called twice a day.) The regiment drilled until seven, when the men were excused for breakfast until eight, after which they formed up for more drill. Dinner was served by Mr. Odell's workers at noon, followed by more drill. The men were called to dress parade at five, where orders were read, inspections were made, and other general military business was conducted. Upon dismissal, they were served a light supper and then were expected to return to their quarters until nine, when they retired. (Thomas Rodman, Goshen, Sept. 2, 1862) And so the routine went while the men and their families waited for the inevitable order to move.

Finally, on September 5, Captain William G. Edgerton arrived at Camp Wickham to muster the regiment into the service of the United States. That same day, a telegram was received setting Saturday, September 6, for departure, as their weapons were awaiting them in New York City. At last, it was time for them to leave behind their civilian pursuits and take up arms in the defense of the Union.

At one o'clock in the afternoon, the regiment was formed up "...and, without arms, but with banners flying and drums beating a lively tune; with knapsacks and haversacks swelled to their utmost capacity, with not only wearing apparel that would never be worn and food that would never be eaten, but with books to read, and keepsakes...we moved through throngs of weeping ones to the depot, where the last hand-shakings and final adieus were given; and at two P.M. the heavily laden train, with wild shrieks to warn away the clinging multitudes, moved off, and we were on our way to the seat of war." (Weygant, 31-32)



MATTHEWS, NORTHROP & CO., ENGRS. & PRS., BUFFALO, N. Y.

Mt. McGregor: The Popular Summer Sanitarium Forty Minutes from Saratoga Springs (Buffalo, N.Y.: Matthews, Northrup & Co., 1884)

“I owe you this for Appomattox”: U.S. Grant’s Mystery Visitor at Mount McGregor

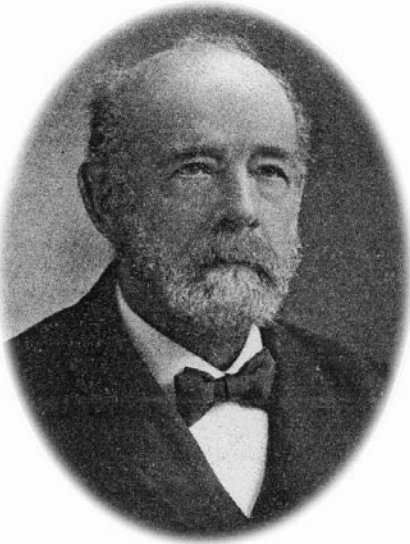
Warren F. Broderick

During the final five weeks of Ulysses Grant’s life, spent in a hospice-like setting at Drexel Cottage on Mount McGregor in Saratoga County, most Americans were aware of the former general and president’s terminal illness. His condition in June and July 1885 received wide notice in the press, and while thousands felt sympathy for the dying national hero, relatively few were extended the honor of an actual visit. Many who came to the mountain resort in the Town of Wilton, northwest of Saratoga Springs, passed within sight of the modest yet comfortable wooden Victorian residence (which later became known as “Grant’s Cottage” and is now a State Historic Site). Some caught a glimpse of Grant seated on the cottage’s porch as they strolled along a path leading to the larger Balmoral Hotel, but Sam Willett, a GAR veteran from Albany, ensured that only invited guests could approach more closely and speak with their revered former leader.

Grant’s condition weakened daily. When he was not resting or meeting with his family, physicians, and other attendants, as much time as possible was devoted to the completion of his *Personal Memoirs*. His remaining visitors mostly consisted of his publisher, Samuel Clemens; other persons in various editorial capacities; politicians; government officials; former Civil War officers; and carefully screened members of the press. Because Grant tired so easily, “it was the desire of the family to save the General from the common run of visitors.”¹ A reporter commented on July 8 that “while most of the visitors [to the hotel] are satisfied with a good look at the general and with his kindly salute, there are some who cannot let well enough alone, but must exhibit their boorishness by...staring at him as if he were a zoological exhibit.”²

On Thursday, July 9—two weeks before his death—Grant felt especially weak from greeting a large group of editors from the Mexican Associated Press on the previous day. Still, he received two visitors, one expected and one unexpected.

¹“I owe you this for Appomattox”: U.S. Grant’s mystery visitor at Mount McGregor



The portrait of Charles Wood appeared in *Brooms, Brushes, and Handles*, Vol. 15, No. 1, November, 1912, p. 40

The former was Robert U. Johnson, associate editor of *Century Magazine*, who had overseen the publication of some articles penned by Grant. Income received for these articles enabled the suddenly impoverished former president to repay some of his more pressing debts.

The second visitor was Charles Wood, owner of a brush factory in Lansingburgh, Rensselaer County. Various newspapers reported on Grant's meetings with both men, but it is doubtful than many readers knew the reason for Wood's visit. Grant wrote the following, among other sentences, to Wood on the little notepad he kept at this side: "I am glad to say that while there is much unblushing wickedness in

the world there is a compensating grandeur of soul. In my case, I have not found that republics are ungrateful, nor are the people."⁴ Readers of the newspapers that carried this quotation the following day were surely mystified. They had no way of knowing that Charles Wood was far removed from the "common run of visitors."

Robert Johnson had learned about Wood the previous year, during a June 1884 visit to Grant's seaside New Jersey cottage. At that time, the financially ruined ex-president vented to the editor about the failure of the Marine Bank and his private banking firm. It was also during this visit that Grant pointed to an empty vase on the mantelpiece that had once held his wife Julia's prized collection of gold coins, which the couple had received from various dignitaries. Grant was forced to sell these treasured heirlooms to repay some of his debts. When this story is retold today, the mention of a generous \$1,500 loan from Wood is usually omitted. In actuality, Grant informed Johnson of the loan and another, for \$1000, from his friend, Mexican Ambassador Matias Romero. Wood and Romero were apparently the only persons who loaned Grant money during this time of severe financial crisis.⁵ (Captain James B. Eads, a "distinguished engineer, also generously offered to assist the General in this, his hour of misfortune," but Grant politely refused.)⁶

Charles Wood was born in Lansingburgh in 1831, and lived there for most of his life until his death in 1917. He learned the brush-making trade from his father, Artemus Wood, and his uncle, Ebenezer Wood. Their business was conducted for over sixty years, until 1915, under the firm name of E. & C. Wood in a series

of factories located on the west side of Third Avenue between 117th and 118th Streets in Lansingburgh (presently part of the city of Troy). He married Eliza Post about 1857 and the couple lived briefly in her native Greene County. In 1861, they moved to Brooklyn, where Wood managed the firm's warehouse on Pearl Street in Manhattan, until they returned to Lansingburgh in 1872. Wood was well known not only as a successful factory owner and as a respected family patriarch, but also as an "historical writer. His work for newspapers and magazines attracted attention for its accuracy."⁸ He contributed a number of articles on the history and development of the highly specialized brush industry to both local newspapers and trade journals. (For many years, Lansingburgh was known as the "Brush Capital of the United States." At the height of the industry, nearly 200 factories were located here, employing over 2,000 workers.) The Wood family home still stands at 645 Third Avenue; one of his factory buildings is just to the north of his house. At the time of his death, Charles Wood was known as the dean of American brush manufacturers.

Broadside price list of brushes

PRICES OF BRUSHES;

MANUFACTURED BY

E. & C. WOOD,

Office and Warehouse, No. 275 PEARL STREET,

Between Beekman and Fulton Streets,

NEW-YORK.

(Steam Factory at Lansingburgh, N. Y.)

ALL KINDS OF BRUSHES AT UNPRECEDENTLY LOW PRICES. CASH PAID FOR BRISTLES.

Dealers will please mention whether they want Twine or Wire Bound Brushes; and also, whether they want Whitewash Brushes with handles, or Whitewash Heads. Terms, Note or Cash.

EBENEZER WOOD, Lansingburgh, N. Y.

CHARLES WOOD, New-York.

Fine Ground Paint Brushes.		Extra Extra Fine Ground Paint Brushes.		Extra Extra Masons' Whitewash Brushes & Heads.		Scrub Brushes.		Cloth Brushes.	
Twine or Wire Bound.		Twine Bound.		Twine Bound.		Per doz. Nett.		Per doz. Nett.	
Per doz. less 40 per cent.		Per doz. Nett.		Per doz. Nett.		Per doz. Nett.		Per doz. Nett.	
7-0	\$15 00	7-0	\$15 00	6 inch	\$8 00	No. 3	\$0 50	No. 2	\$1 00
6-0	13 00	6-0	13 00	6 3/4 "	10 00	" 5	0 62	" 3	1 25
5-0	11 00	5-0	11 00	7 "	14 00	" 7	0 75	" 5	1 50
4-0	10 00	4-0	10 00	8 "	18 00	" 9	0 88	" 7	2 00
3-0	9 00	3-0	9 00	9 "	22 00	" 12	1 03	" 9	2 50
2-0	7 50	2-0	7 50	Super Extra Whitewash Heads, all White Bristles		" 20	1 25	" 11	3 00
1-0	6 00	1-0	6 00	Per doz. Nett.		" 22	1 50	" 13	3 50
No. 1	5 00	Super Extra all White Bristles		8 1/2 inch	\$24 00	" 28	2 00	" 16	6 00
" 2	4 00	Twine Bound.		10 "	36 00	" 32	2 50	" 14 Handle	1 50
" 3	3 00	Per doz. Nett.		With Handles 25 cents per dozen extra.		" 36	3 00	" 16 "	3 00
" 4	2 50	7-0	\$18 00	Horse Brushes.		Per doz. Nett.		" 18 "	4 50
" 5	2 00	6-0	16 00	No. 3	\$1 50	No. 7	\$0 75	Lather Brushes.	
" 6	1 50	5-0	14 00	" 5	2 00	" 9	1 25	No. 2	\$0 25
" 7	1 25	4-0	12 00	" 11	2 50	" 11	1 50	" 5	0 51
Varnish Brushes.		3-0	10 00	" 14	2 50	" 15	2 00	" 6	0 50
Twine or Wire Bound.		Whitewash Brushes & Whitewash Heads.		" 16	3 00	" 18	3 00	" 7	0 62
Per doz. less 40 per cent.		Per doz. Nett.		" 20	3 00	" 20	6 00	" 8	0 75
7-0	\$17 00	5 1/2 inch	\$1 50	" 24	3 50	Improved Handle.		" 9	0 87
6-0	15 00	6 "	1 75	" 26	4 00	No. 3	0 75	" 10	1 00
5-0	13 00	7 "	2 00	" 30	4 50	" 5	1 25	" 11	1 25
4-0	11 00	8 "	2 50	" 36	5 00	Extra Dusters.		" 7 Extra fine	1 00
3-0	9 00	9 "	3 00	" 40	5 50	Per doz. Nett.		" 9 "	1 50
2-0	8 00	7 1/2 "	3 50	" 43	6 00	No. 1	\$1 50	" 11 "	2 25
1-0	7 00	8 1/2 "	4 00	" 44	6 00	" 2	9 00	We also manufacture, and keep constantly on hand a complete assortment of	
No. 1	6 00	9 "	4 50	" 56	6 50	" 3	2 50	Hair	Brushes,
" 2	5 00	10 "	5 00	" 60	7 00	" 4	3 00	Hat	"
" 3	4 00	Extra Whitewash Brushes and Whitewash Heads.		" 70	12 00	Extra Heavy.		Marking	"
" 4	3 50	5 1/2 inch	\$1 75	" 72	15 00	No. 5	4 00		
" 5	3 00	6 "	2 00	78 Leather	9 00	" 6	5 00		
" 6	2 50	7 "	2 50	" 80	12 00	" 7	3 50		
Sash Brushes.		8 "	3 00	" 84	18 00	" 8	6 00		
Round or Flat.		Per doz. Nett.		Shoe Brushes.					
Per doz. less 40 per cent.		Per doz. Nett.							
No. 8	\$2 50	5 1/2 inch	\$1 75						
" 7	2 25	6 "	2 00						



COURTESY OF NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Grant and his family on Drexel Cottage's front porch.

While Wood had not fought in the Civil War, two of his younger brothers served in the New York 21st Cavalry. Artemus Wood, Jr., died in Winchester, Virginia, on December 7, 1864, of wounds received in battle. George C. Wood was mustered out at Alexandria, Virginia, in May 30, 1865, and lived in Lansingburgh until his death in 1923. Neither of these men served directly under Grant in the Army of the Potomac, but this did not lessen Charles Wood's patriotism and deep appreciation of the general's wartime leadership. The deep sincerity of Wood's appreciation would not become evident until May 1884.

Ulysses Grant's well-publicized financial collapse in 1884 stunned the nation. His financial troubles can be traced to his joining the firm of Grant and Ward, established in 1881 by his son, Ulysses S. "Buck" Grant, Jr., and two other partners, Ferdinand Ward and James D. Fish. Ward was a young and energetic Wall Street financier, while Fish was a banker and land speculator; their poor judgment and risky investments would bring the Grant family financial ruin and public disgrace.

The former president joined the firm in 1883, and while he was not a wealthy investor like Buck's father-in-law, Colorado businessman and State Senator Jerome B. Chaffee, he did place \$100,000—which comprised most of his savings—at risk.

Both Grants were unaware of the dangerous land speculation practiced by Ward and Fish that involved the illegal use of identical securities as collateral for multiple loans by the Marine Bank (which was also operated by the firm). “If all of Grant & Ward’s investments were successful,” Grant biographer William McFeely concludes, “if all the loans had been repaid, no one would have needed to know that the security had been inadequate.” But once the firm failed to cover their loans, their firm and the Marine Bank collapsed like a house of cards, leaving the Grant family nearly penniless. Their corporate liabilities totaled over \$16 million, with assets of only \$57,000. “Grant was destitute and on display as an object of national pity.”⁹

While Ward and Fish eventually served prison time for their actions, most Americans—rightly so—believed that the Grants were well-meaning and unwilling participants in their schemes. Most of the press supported the Grants, but some newspapers, such as the *New York World* and *New York Sun*, which had not been among Grant’s supporters to begin with, refused to absolve the Grants of blame. The *Sun* ran an article entitled “Is Ulysses S. Grant Guilty?” and others discussing the former president’s role in the debacle, assailing him for attempting to “shirk responsibility.” Wall Street had formed a “shameful estimate” of how Grant allowed this “firm of swindlers” to use his good name and reputation to secure the trust of other unwitting investors.¹⁰

If Americans felt sympathy for the financial ruin of their troubled hero, only one took bold, decisive action: Charles Wood. On the evening of Saturday, May 10, he sat down to read the daily Troy and New York City papers with dismay. The *Troy Daily Press* ran an article entitled “The Grant Failure,” which noted that “the Marine Bank Grant-Ward Failure will prove the worst ever known in Wall Street.” The *New York Times* described in detail “the frauds in the down-town,” while the *Sun* commented that “the worst is not yet known regarding” the debacle.

Charles Wood immediately wrote a personal check for a loan of \$500 and mailed it to Grant, offering to loan him an additional \$1,000, the loan to be paid one year from the date without interest or security. He noted that this check was being sent “on account of my share for services ending April, 1865,” an obvious reference to Grant’s ending the Civil War by securing Lee’s surrender. “I owe you this for Appomattox,” Wood added.¹¹ Grant responded two days later:

Dear Sir:—

Your more than kind letter on Saturday, inclosing a check for \$500, and proposing to send like amount on my note, payable in one year without interest, is received. The money at this time would be of exceeding use to me, having not enough to pay one month’s servant hire, or room, if I were

“I owe you this for Appomattox”: U.S. Grant’s mystery visitor at Mount McGregor

to leave my house, and nothing coming in till the 1st of August. I therefore accept the check just received, and this is my acknowledgment of a debt of \$500, one year from this date on the terms of your letter.

Very truly yours,

U S. Grant

Upon receipt of Grant's response, Wood immediately sent the additional \$1,000, eliciting this response from Grant dated July 19:

My Dear Sir: I am in receipt of your very kind letter of the 17th inst. with two checks of \$500 each. You have conferred an obligation more than I can ever repay. The money, of course, I do not doubt that I can return. But, being caught without \$100 in my pocket, and nothing coming in until August, it became a serious question what to do. You, in the generosity of your heart, have relieved that anxiety. Every precaution was at once made to reduce expenses to a minimum. My house at Long Branch—Mrs. Grant's—is offered for rent, and the one we occupy here will be in the fall, if prospects are no brighter than at present. Hoping that prosperity will attend you and yours, I remain faithfully yours,

U. S. Grant

Grant returned the \$1,000 on January 5, 1885, with the following letter:

My Dear Mr. Wood:

I take the profound pleasure in inclosing to you the check which you will find with this. I wish to state to you how great was the relief afforded by your timely loan. At the time of the failure of Grant and Ward I had not \$100 in my pocket. I had paid my bills for the previous months with checks on the firm. Most of them were not presented until after the failure. Your checks enabled me to meet the second call, and gave me something to go upon until another turn could be made. Mrs. Grant was fortunate enough to own a couple of small houses in Washington, one of which she sold for the sum of \$6500, since which we have been comfortable in means to live upon, but with nothing to pay past debts.

I return you with the greatest pleasure \$1000 of the \$1500 which you so kindly, and without solicitation or claim upon you, sent me. It affords me greater pleasure from the fact that I have earned this by my own work, I hope in the near future to send you the other \$500.

With my best wishes to you and yours, I am, very truly,

U. S. Grant

It was income received by Grant for his articles on the Civil War that appeared in *Century Magazine* that enabled him to repay his debt to Wood, making the arrival of Johnson and Wood at Mount McGregor on the same day especially ironic.

When Charles Wood turned up unexpectedly at the Drexel Cottage on July 9, Grant was in great discomfort and could barely speak. Nevertheless, Wood was warmly welcomed. Grant's principal physician, Dr. John H. Douglas, wrote the following about the visit in his journal:

"Among the notable visitors to-day was Mr. Charles Wood of Lansingburgh, N.Y., who, when the disaster of May 1884 came upon Genl. Grant, sent him a sum of money for his immediate use, part of which as gift, and part a loan, the latter to be returned without interest, when convenient. This had been repaid. He lunched with the family today and the General received him with marked kindness."⁷

His final communication to Wood was written on four little slips of notepaper in pencil "in a trembling hand":

"I am very sorry that I am unable to converse even in a whisper. I am reclining in bed as long as it rests me this morning, because yesterday I had a very trying day. My worst hours, most painful ones, are from 4 to 7 in the afternoon. Yesterday we had a number of particular friends call and stay through those hours. I had to converse incessantly with my pencil. About the close the Mexican editors called in a body and delivered a speech in Spanish that had to be translated and spoken in English. I replied. My speech was read in English, then translated and spoken in Spanish. Then there was a second speech and reply. By this time I was nearly exhausted. I am badly off this minute, because the doctor has been dressing my mouth, and that is always painful."¹²

He concluded with the three sentences quoted previously. This note, and the other letters from Grant, became Wood's prize possessions, which he later framed. Wood later recalled his meeting with Grant and remarked that the letters "show, as do all the other records of the dead hero, that he was a simple, unaffected man, entirely free from overvaluation of his own work and touched by the kindly sympathy of others."

The story of Charles Wood's generosity did not become known until August 5, 1892, when an article entitled "Some Letters From General Grant" appeared in the *New York Times*. The writer interviewing Wood, who was vacationing at Ocean Grove, New Jersey, was shown the letters from Grant. The reporter noted



Drexel Cottage atop Mount McGregor.

that Wood had been returned the final \$500 of his loan following Grant's death, and that Wood then donated this money equally to the New York Methodist Hospital in Brooklyn and to the earthquake relief fund in Charleston, South Carolina. Similar versions of the story appeared in a March 1910 edition of *Brooms, Brushes, and Handles*,

a trade journal, and again in the *New York Times* on April 10, 1917.¹³ Wood's visit to Mount McGregor, as well as the loan, was mentioned by Oliver P. Clarke in his popular memorial booklet, *General Grant at Mount McGregor*, first issued in 1895 and reissued in 1906.¹⁴

Robert U. Johnson mentioned the generosity of Charles Wood in his 1923 autobiography, *Remembered Yesterdays*, and Johnson's recollection of Wood is reiterated in Horace Green's *General Grant's Last Stand* (1936). The story is also mentioned briefly in two recent biographical works: *The General's Wife* by Ishbel Ross (1959) and *The Captain Departs* by Thomas Pitkin (1973), the latter an excellent detailed account of the last few years of Grant's life.¹⁵ Julia Dent Grant mentioned the loan in her *Personal Memoirs*, but these were not published until 1975. Only now has the complete story of the factory owner's generosity been fully told.

The authors of two recent works may have embellished the story. *Many are the Hearts* (1975), a very readable biography by Richard Goldhurst, states that Charles Wood was a "middle-aged man in dark suit, straw boater, and county shoes" who introduced himself to Grant with "a broad smile on his face, hand extended."¹⁶ Goldhurst's source, if any, for this description of Wood cannot be identified. In the most recent work touching on the subject, *Grant and Twain* (2004), Mark Perry not only refers to Wood as a "Union veteran" but also contends that during the visit, while Grant could not speak, Wood "recounted his own time in the Union Army, [and] reviewed some of its battles."¹⁷ Charles Wood does not appear to have served in the Civil War based on a search of military records, though he may have mentioned the service and sacrifice of his two younger brothers to the former general.

The true story of Charles Wood and Ulysses S. Grant is, in fact, so amazing that it does not require any embellishment.

Notes

1. *New York Times*, June 23, 1885, 5.
2. *Troy Daily Times*, July 9, 1885, 1.
3. *New York Tribune*, July 10, 1885, 5.
4. *New York Times*, July 10, 1885, 1; *New York Herald*, July 10, 1885, 10; *Troy Daily Press*, July 10, 1885, 3.
5. Robert Underwood Johnson, *Remembered Yesterdays*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1923), 213; Horace Green, *General Grant's Last Stand: A Biography*. (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 277-278.
6. [Julia Dent Grant], *The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant, Edited, With Notes and Foreword by John Y. Simon*. (NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), 328, 332.
7. (Dr.) John Hancock Douglas, Journal, June 22.—July 23, 1885, John Hancock Douglas Papers, Library of Congress, 253.
8. *Brooms, Brushes, and Handles*, Vol. 19, no. 7, May, 1917, 33.
9. William McFeely, *Grant: A Biography*. (NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1981), 490-493. See also Russell Roberts, "The Wall Street Scandal of Grant and Ward," *Financial History*, Issue 81, Spring, 2004, 13-15, 36.
10. *New York Sun*, May 13, 1885, 2; May 27, 1885, 2; May 28, 1885, 2.
11. The complete text of all four letters from Grant to Wood can be found in the *New York Times*, August 5, 1892, 3.
12. According to Dr. Douglas's July 9 Journal entry, Charles Wood had given Grant or his heirs "consent" to publish this quotation as he saw fit.
13. [anon.], "He Helped U. S. Grant," *Brooms, Brushes, and Handles*, Vol. 12, no. 5, March, 1910, 41.
14. O. P. Clarke, *General Grant at Mount MacGregor [sic]*. (Saratoga Springs, NY: Cozzens & Waterbury, 1895), 37-38; reissued (Saratoga Springs, NY: The Saratogian Print, 1906), 37; reissued (Saratoga Springs, NY: Saratoga Sun Print, n.d.), 37-38.
15. Ishbel Ross, *The General's Wife: The Life of Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant*. (NY: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1959), 284-285; Thomas Pitkin, *The Captain Departs: Ulysses Grant's Last Campaign*. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 81.
16. Richard Goldhurst, *Many are the Hearts: The Agony and the Triumph of Ulysses S. Grant*. (NY: Reader's Digest Press, 1975), 218.
17. Mark Perry, *Grant and Twain: The Story of a Friendship That Changed America*. (New York: Random House 2004), 160, 220-221.



Devils Den, Gettysburg

“Awful beyond description”: The Ordeal of the Hudson Valley Regiments in the Army of the Potomac in 1863

Mark James Morreale

I

While writing to his parents on May 9, 1863, Private Lewis Coe Bevier, a cook in the Third Corps Hospital, observed that “Their is an awful lot of wounded in the hospital now from that last battle in fredericksburg.”¹ Indeed, the Battle of Chancellorsville, to which Bevier actually refers, had been a trying time for the regiments of Sickles’ Third Corps, including the 124th and Bevier’s own 120th. The campaign started off well enough. The troops were full of promise on April 28, when they broke camp along the banks of the Rappahannock River and began marching eastward while the Fifth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Corps trudged to the west along the northern bank of the river in an attempt to encircle Lee’s army. The Third Corps, along with the First and Sixth, were part of Hooker’s initial grand deception of Lee, pinning his Army of Northern Virginia in place while three of Hooker’s corps slipped around and behind the Confederate entrenchments at Fredericksburg. Years later, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Weygant recalled this time when, as a captain in command of Company A of the 124th New York, his heavily laden men moved through a dense fog, carrying “in addition to...food, blankets, gun, and accoutrements; eighty rounds of ammunition, and a change of clothing.” He further commented that, “Just where we were going, or what was to be accomplished or attempted, were matters about which we could but speculate.”² The following day, the First and Third Corps countermarched in the opposite direction, following the rest of the army. It was at this time that the soldiers of the 120th, having just been paid, were in fine fettle as they moved westward, arriving at United States’ Ford around midnight,³ unaware of the nature of the hard fight to follow.

In his monograph on Chancellorsville, Stephen W. Sears describes “the Wilderness,” which the Third Corps was about to encounter:

Since colonial times the Wilderness had been the site of a nascent iron industry, but all that remained of it now was Catharine Furnace...Abandoned in the 1840s, the furnace had recently been reactivated to produce iron for the Confederate war machine. It was this iron industry that gave the Wilderness its distinctive character. Most of the first-growth timber had been cut to make charcoal to feed the furnaces and foundries, to be replaced by a second-growth tangle of dwarf pine and cedar and hickory and a scrub oak known locally as blackjack. Undergrowth in this warped and pinched forest grew dense and brambly.⁴

In addition, much of the ground was uneven, occasionally swampy, and cut by unexpected ravines. It was within this “dark, eerie, impenetrable maze” that the 120th and 124th New York would forever lose the descriptive term “green.”

When it crossed into the Wilderness on May 1, the 124th was not at full strength. Since its initial recruitment in September 1862, and without yet losing a man in combat, the regiment had already been depleted by a third: thirty to typhoid, 100 to various illnesses and disabilities, fifteen to desertion, 100 more on sick leave, and thirty-five or so on detached duty elsewhere, including the ambulance corps.⁵ Such statistics typify this war, where more died of disease than bullets, and where discipline was not what it might have been in a professional army.⁶

On the late afternoon and early evening of the first, the 124th and 120th stacked arms in the vicinity of the Chancellor House, where both of the divisions they belonged to—Whipple’s and Berry’s—were to be held in reserve.⁷ Hooker, however, “had now abandoned the offensive,” as Weygant phrased it, and the position of the reserve would soon become the front line. At noon on the following day, Sickles’ Corps detected the rear echelons of “Stonewall” Jackson’s famous flank attack moving in a southerly direction past the Third Corps picket line. Thinking that Lee was retreating, Sickles received permission from Hooker to advance. The 124th became part of this forward movement⁸ and soon was embroiled in its first firefight. “The next moment,” Weygant reported, “the sound of heavy musketry firing came from the woods in front and [Augustus Van Horne] Ellis [the 124th’s Colonel] hurried us forward up the hill.... Under such circumstances, Ellis was not the kind of man to wait for orders. Hurriedly forming a line of battle and placing himself in front of the colors, he ordered a charge.”⁹ Sergeant Reeves remembered the moment: “We were hurried on at double quick and the



MARK MOREALE

Farm road and fence at Gettysburg National Military Park

balls began to whistle over our heads.... The rebs had planted themselves in the edge of the woods, and we had to cross an open field to get to them, besides a big ditch.... The rebs fired a volley into them [the 122nd Pennsylvania] and they broke and ran and put us all in confusion...”¹⁰

This precipitous advance began a seesaw battle for the 124th, falling back one moment, charging and retaking lost ground the next. However, they had to fall back permanently after Jackson’s Corps annihilated the Army of the Potomac’s XI Corps far off to the right and rear of the 124th’s position. That evening, the regiment, facing westward confronting Jackson’s Corps, became engaged in a rare night action. Weygant postulated that the 124th may have been responsible for the wounding and subsequent death of Jackson during this battle.¹¹ The following day, a Private from Company E, 124th New York, observed in his diary: “Out of 540 men that went in 160 came out with the colors.”¹²

As Howard’s panicked XI Corps fled east through the Chancellor House clearing, carrying men, pack mules, wagons, and materiel before it, Berry’s division—and with it the 120th New York—had the task of stabilizing the deteriorating Union position with dusk and Jackson’s Corps coming on fast. Their colonel proudly proclaimed that the division, “with the cooperation of troops and artillery,

brought up by Pleasanton, just at this critical juncture, saved the Fifth Corps, lying in their [the Confederates'] front, from being flanked, and with it, probably, the routing of Hooker's army at Chancellorsville."¹³ The following morning, Jackson's divisions—now under the command of J.E.B. Stuart—"made frequent and desperate attacks...upon the Union positions" and forced the eventual withdrawal of Hooker's army closer to the river. During this retreat on May 3, General Berry—the 120th's division commander—was killed.¹⁴ As a result of this struggle, the 120th lost nine killed, forty-five wounded, and eighteen missing.¹⁵

As might be expected, May 3 was no less difficult for the tired men of the 124th. While attempting to defend the clearing at Fairview, the regiment initially endured a severe shelling from Confederate batteries placed at Hazel Grove, the very part of the field Sickles had been forced to evacuate the day before and one of the few clear spots of high ground suitable for the deployment of artillery in the Wilderness. To alleviate the pressure on his line, Sickles once again called upon Ellis's 124th. Weygant picks up the narrative:

Advancing through the woods directly towards us, was the 23rd North Carolina supported by another North Carolina regiment.... Thus far these Carolinians had swept away everything in front of them, but the terrific opening fire of the 124th, which was poured into their ranks when they were less than fifty yards off, not only brought the men of the 23rd to a halt but cause them to fall with their faces to the ground to escape its withering effect; and the principle part of the immediately answering bullets came from their supporting line.... In less than ten minutes this second line was brought to the ground, and the men of the first line sprang to their feet again, and poured into our ranks a most wicked volley...—and so the fight went on.¹⁶

Running low on ammunition and now facing Confederate reinforcements, the 124th again retired. Its color guard had been decimated, five out of nine being killed or wounded.¹⁷ In his official report, Colonel Ellis praised his men, saying they "fought like tigers" even in retreat.¹⁸ The regiment had been in continuous action from the early morning until it finally reached the Army of the Potomac's newly reconstituted main line at four in the afternoon.¹⁹

For Weygant and his fellow Orange Blossoms, the Battle of Chancellorsville had basically come to a close, but one more drama remained. After having lost one division commander (General Berry) the previous day, the Third Corps lost another—the 124th's own General Amiel W. Whipple—on the fourth. Weygant witnessed the death:

About two o'clock I met General Whipple who...congratulated me on my fortunate escape from the picket line on Sunday morning [where Weygant had been wounded]. He then walked on a few yards and entered into conversation with a lieutenant of the 86th New York...[when] [p]resently I heard another thud, and hastily turning round to learn if any of the 124th had been struck, saw the general, who was not more than five rods away, reel and fall.²⁰

The Union's own famous marksmen, Berdan's Sharpshooters, then hunted their Confederate counterparts down, killing at least three who had been stationed in the trees above.²¹ This was deadly, nerve-wracking warfare, another indication of how quickly this war was changing. Modern warfare had become a reality. So emblematic was this baptism of fire at Chancellorsville for the men of the 124th that Stephen Crane was inspired by their example when he wrote *The Red Badge of Courage*.²²

II

A month passed before an event occurred that brought together in one place all four of the regiments under discussion here. The event was Lee's second invasion of the North. The place was Gettysburg.

In a letter to his mother on June 3, Richard T. Van Wyck, of the 150th New York, lamented:

The 150th is destined to spend the pleasant summer months in, and in the vicinity of, this great metropolis [Baltimore]; whose band discoursed its melodious strains to throngs of visitors in the Park amid the plaudits of the enthusiastic Baltimoreans, while the echo comes to us in ten thousand different ways and shapes, that our Regiment is a good "institution," a "Big Thing," a "fortunate location by our Col.," "out of harm's way" also of the Rebs, and finally ending in the query, "who wouldn't go for a soldier?"²³

Less than two weeks later, on June 13, one senses the excitement in Van Wyck's tone when he wrote his cousin Sarah, "We were greeted this morning with the news of another raid of the Rebs in Maryland.... A little variety just at present would be a fine thing, perhaps not so fine after we get out there and [are] deprived of our special privileges here. But I am willing to see some rough life now after such a season of apathy and indolence."²⁴ A few days later, in another letter to his mother, he excitedly proclaimed, "we are likely to have something to do with the Rebels before long."²⁵ Even so, his regiment stayed in Baltimore a while longer, as Van Wyck reported to his cousin on June 24: "You can faintly

imagine the excitement this raid of the Rebs has given the people of Baltimore. By this morning's paper we learn of the possible collision of two armies upon the old battleground of Maryland. The result no one knows...."²⁶ It would be his penultimate letter from Baltimore. Three days later, the men of the regiment were awestruck when they first beheld the Army of the Potomac spread out below their bivouac near Monocacy Bridge. Major Henry A. Gildersleeve vividly remembered the moment:

What a spectacle for a recruit to look upon. We were amazed at the length of the wagon trains and batteries of artillery as they filed into the valley below us and went into park for the night. Thousands of camp fires lighted up the region around, and we stood spell-bound at the sight of the vast engineering of war that was before us. It was in this camp, inspired by this spectacle, we first imbibed the true spirit of war, and nerved ourselves for the trying scenes we knew we must encounter, and desperate deeds which were before us.²⁷

Meanwhile, a depressed Captain Weygant, recovering from his wounds received at Chancellorsville, mourned the loss of so many of his comrades in the 124th New York.²⁸ He was quickly distracted from such melancholy thought as his regiment, on June 6, was chosen to accompany Pleasanton's Cavalry Corps on a secret mission to Beverly Ford (on the Rappahannock River), which resulted in the largest cavalry battle of the war, the Battle of Brandy Station on June 9. Here Weygant gained valuable command experience. With a detachment of two companies numbering about sixty men, he was required to hold off an entire regiment of 300 dismounted cavalry, which he did successfully, but not without suffering substantial casualties.²⁹

By June 14, the 124th saw some important changes, as its old brigade and division, so cut up at Chancellorsville, was disbanded. It now became part of Brigadier General Hobart Ward's brigade of Major General David Birney's division; Ward was a tough, intimidating veteran with experience in the Mexican War as well as with outstanding service during the Peninsula Campaign the year before.³⁰ He would lead them well in the difficult days ahead. Immediately after this reorganization, the 124th (and the rest of the Third Corps) began the fateful trip northward in pursuit of Lee. By the 16th, the regiment had reached the old Manassas battlefield; by the 19th, in a pouring rain, it approached Leesburg; by the 21st, it heard musketry in the direction of Winchester; by the 25th, the Corps crossed the Potomac River on pontoon boats at Edward's Ferry after a grueling thirty-mile march; by the 28th, the regiment had passed through Frederick, greeted in much the same way as the 120th would be (see below); after another

hard march of 25 miles, it reached Taneytown; and on the 30th it “pushed on to Emmetsburg.”³¹ In his diary, Captain Weygant recorded:

The men of our regiment are in tolerably good spirits but have lost considerable flesh during the last week, and complain bitterly whenever we start on a march, on the pain in their swollen, blistered feet. The country through which we have for several days been moving, is fertile and well cultivated. The villages contain many fine cottages, and the people generally appear to be strongly Union in sentiment.³²

Ten miles away, just across the Mason-Dixon line, lay the quiet crossroads town of Gettysburg.

While the 124th had been engaged in a good deal of combat since Fredericksburg, Colonel Theodore Gates and his 20th Regiment New York State Militia (known also as the 80th New York State Volunteers) had seen little action since they had been given the soft assignment of guarding the Richmond and Potomac Railroad while being stationed at Aquia Creek and elsewhere.³³ They deserved the rest, considering their experiences at both Second Manassas and Antietam the year before. They were veterans now and no doubt looked a bit more soberly at the possibility of renewed combat than did Van Wyck and his fellow soldiers in the 150th New York Volunteers. On June 27, the 80th was ordered to rejoin the First Corps, commanded by the highly regarded John Reynolds of Pennsylvania. It met up with Reynolds’ Corps just short of the Pennsylvania border.³⁴

Lewis Coe Bevier, stationed at Aquia Creek, Virginia, had no idea where his own regiment, the 120th New York (still attached to Sickles’ Third Corps), had gone. In a letter to his parents, he speculated, “I suppose they are some where around harpers ferry after old Lee.”³⁵ As someone with no combat experience would phrase it, Bevier exclaimed, “I think old Hooker will give him [illegible] before he gets out of pennsylvania and I hope he will take every one of them prisoner or else Kill them.”³⁶ Still, Bevier was not so wrong about what his unit was up to, for his 120th New York, along with the 124th, soon experienced some hard marching to catch up with Lee’s rapidly moving army. Yet, some of this forced march—which began on June 24—was actually pleasant. The 120th’s Corporal Egbert Lewis of “I” Company remembered:

It was pleasant to look upon the comfortable homes, the fine orchards loaded with fruit, and the large fields of waving grain. The people with whom we conversed, were outspoken in their loyalty to the Union, and we felt that we were among friends. The ladies in many cities and villages through which

we passed, were wild with joy at the sight of the Union army, and welcomed us with patriotic songs and waving flags. Our men who visited houses along the line of march, found plenty of bread, pies, cakes, biscuits, milk, fruit, and vegetables, which were given to them or purchased at very low prices. Some of these loyal people did not keep enough for themselves to eat. In some of the towns and villages, ladies, with their servants, stood in front of their houses eagerly passing pure cold water to our thirsty soldiers.³⁷

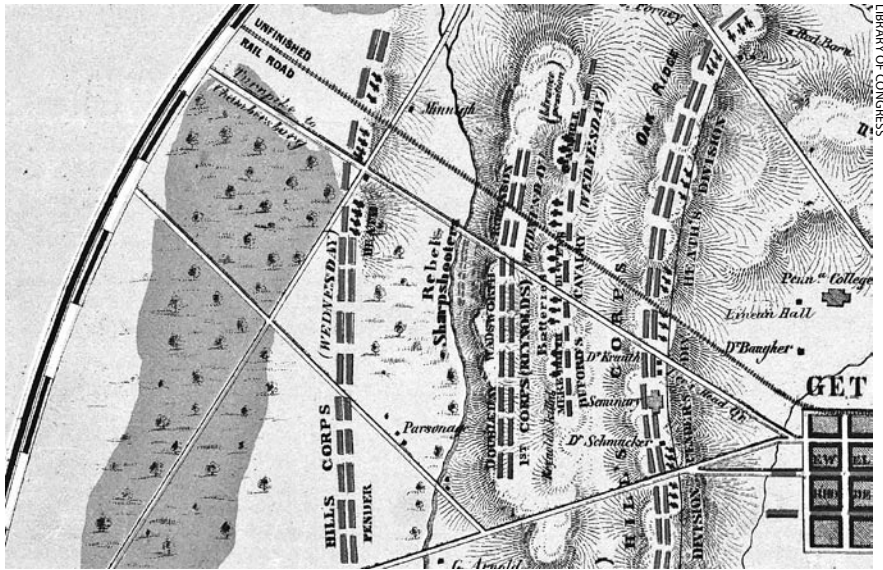
One cannot help but contrast this bucolic vision with what was about to occur.

A few days later, Lincoln replaced Hooker with Major General George Gordon Meade, until then the commander of Hooker's Fifth Corps. In the parlance of the day, the ball was about to begin.

III

As part of the Army of the Potomac's First Corps, the 20th New York Militia would be the first Hudson Valley regiment discussed in this study to reach the field at Gettysburg. The battle had begun around 5:30 on the morning of July 1, when Heth's Confederate Division of A. P. Hill's recently constituted Third Corps of the Army of Northern Virginia clashed with John Buford's dismounted brigades of cavalry west of town.³⁸ By 10 a.m., John Reynolds, commander of the Union army's First Corps, had come to the rescue of Buford's hard-pressed troopers by throwing into the fray Brigadier General James S. Wadsworth's First Division (including the vaunted Iron Brigade). They came just at the right moment and in the right place, but within the hour Reynolds was dead,³⁹ his command temporarily falling into the hands of Abner Doubleday, the putative inventor of baseball. Then a lull settled on the battlefield as each side quickly brought up reinforcements. Among these was Rowley's Third Division of the late Reynolds' First Corps, which included the 20th New York—28 officers and 259 men—who were placed to the left of the Iron Brigade near McPherson's Woods (where Reynolds had fallen).⁴⁰

The 20th had been marching quickly toward the sounds of battle since 8 a.m.; when it arrived west of town, the regiment immediately formed a line of battle in the Hagerstown Road facing north.⁴¹ Then it marched directly toward the town of Gettysburg, creating a swath through the ripe fields, crossed Willoughby Run, and entered the battle in support of Buford's skirmishers on McPherson's Ridge. As it emerged onto the field of battle around 11 a.m., the regiment quickly suffered its first casualty. Captain Cook said the initial shock of this "incident thrilled every one with a sense of danger as great perhaps as that felt during the



Detail of map showing McPherson's Ridge on right, with Willoughby Run in the center

battle itself.”⁴² Now facing directly west,⁴³ the men proceeded over McPherson's Ridge and into the ravine formed by the meandering run. “The field beyond it,” Gates explained in 1879, “was covered with grain, affording excellent shelter for the enemy's sharpshooters, and the field was alive with them.”⁴⁴ The position, therefore, was untenable. They were soon ordered back atop the ridge, the rest of the brigade forming a line of battle behind them on the downward slope. Here they stood exposed for twenty minutes.

Clearly visible somewhat over 200 yards beyond the run was the farm of E. Harmon.⁴⁵ If not occupied quickly, it would become a haven for Confederate skirmishers.⁴⁶ Ordered by General Wadsworth to occupy Harmon's property before the Confederates did, Gates sent Captain Ambrose N. Baldwin's K Company to perform the hazardous assignment.⁴⁷ Amelia Harmon later recalled: “[I]n poured a stream of maddened, powder-blackened blue coats, who ordered us to the cellar, while they dispersed to the various west windows throughout the house.”⁴⁸ Company K immediately became the target of Confederate attentions. An hour later, Baldwin was in desperate need of help, so Gates sent him another company from the 20th, Captain William Cunningham's Company G. The two isolated companies held the Harmon homestead for two more hours before, surrounded on three sides, they set several of the outbuildings on fire and withdrew.⁴⁹ Miraculously, several harrowing hours later—and with the assistance



Casualties on McPherson's Ridge, Gettysburg

of the Union cavalry—the two companies made it back to the Union lines on Cemetery Hill. It was 1 p.m. The beleaguered First Corps and the cavalry it had come to support three hours earlier were now outnumbered as much as two to one by the divisions of A.P. Hill's Third Corps to the west and Rodes' recently arrived Division of Ewell's Second Corps to the north.⁵⁰

Soon after Rodes' arrival, the entire Union line was on the verge of being flanked as plunging artillery fire from the heights of Oak Ridge began crashing down the length of the Union line, reaching Gates' regiment approximately a mile away.⁵¹ This caused the 20th's brigade to change its position once more, this time the right half facing to the north while Gates and the 151st Pennsylvania regiment (which he now also took command of), along with Cooper's battery of artillery, continued to face the increasingly dangerous threat from the west. The 20th's Captain Cook saw Pettigrew's North Carolinians coming. "In poetry and romance," he remembered in 1903, "the Confederate uniform is gray. In actual service it was a butternut brown, and...was...as dirty, disreputable and unromantic as can well be imagined." Yet, he also admits that, despite their ragged appearance, "They could shoot all right and...gave us no time to criticize their appearance. Our men sprang to their feet, returned their fire, and the battle was

on.”⁵² Not long after, both of the flanks of Biddle’s brigade were being threatened, so Cooper’s battery made good its escape. The 20th, with the rest of its brigade, found itself alone and retreat became the only option.⁵³ The fallback was agonizingly slow and deliberate, including a last ditch defense on Seminary Ridge, and proved terribly costly for both sides.⁵⁴ “The fighting,” as Gates put it, “for some time was now most desperate.”⁵⁵ The brigade escaped by retreating directly down the railroad (a scene of heavy fighting earlier in the day), then into and through Gettysburg, finally resting on Cemetery Hill just outside town.⁵⁶ It had already been a long, arduous day for the 20th, but their experience at Gettysburg had only just begun.

IV

That evening, the XII Corps finally began to arrive, occupying Culp’s Hill on the right of the Union line. Major Gildersleeve recalled that:

[T]he first unmistakable indications we discovered of a battle were the slightly wounded who were able to get back to the hospitals without assistance. Then we began to encounter ambulances loaded with those who had been seriously wounded. Field hospitals were passed; we could hear the rattle of musketry and see the smoke of the conflict near at hand, and we soon found ourselves a part and parcel of the grand Army of the North, fighting among these hills, the battle of Gettysburg. The first missiles we saw were shells from some Rebel batteries passing over our heads.⁵⁷

Van Wyck’s large but inexperienced 150th New York, trailing the rest of its division due to its inexperience with such marches, did not settle in until 8 a.m. on July 2.⁵⁸ Writing to his friend Robert Johnston a few weeks after the battle, Van Wyck explained how the grueling forced marches were changing his soldierly habits:

[We] have got quite used to it, we have diminished our clothing to a shelter tent and rubber blanket, and a few kitchen tools, consisting of tin cup and fry pan, knife and fork, besides from one to three day’s rations of uncooked food, crackers, bacon, pork, coffee and sugar, and every rest or camp we speedily make a cup of coffee.⁵⁹

The Third Corps, with the 120th and 124th New York, had reached the field as well, starting to arrive around 2 a.m. on July 2. The 124th seemed to have suffered very much on the march to Emmitsburg the day before; Weygant noted that only 264 men met muster that morning; an additional ninety-eight men from the Orange Blossoms had fallen out due to sunstroke, disease, and physical

(actually part of Houck's Ridge), between which lay the Rose farmstead and the infamous Wheatfield. Watching this unexpected movement from Cemetery Ridge, Captain Samuel C. Armstrong of Company D of the 125th New York called the advance "magnificent." (A few hours later, he described its bloody repulse as "terrible."⁶²) Unfortunately for Sickles' Third Corps, both its flanks would be "in the air" and no amount of reinforcements from the Fifth or Second Corps would save it from its fate. Captain Weygant's 124th New York felt the onslaught of Longstreet's attack first.

Despite their combat experience, Weygant's men spent their leisure time "quietly awaiting the coming shock" rather than building breastworks,⁶³ something both sides would do as a matter of course during the Overland Campaign in Virginia the following year.⁶⁴ Then around 3 p.m., Lee's artillery opened up upon Sickles' advanced line; an hour later, "long solid lines of infantry appeared advancing directly against" the position of Ward's brigade.⁶⁵ As on the first day of the battle, Lee mustered overwhelming numbers at the point of attack.⁶⁶ By the time five o'clock arrived, Captain Weygant was the 124th's new regimental commander. The small 124th⁶⁷ was deployed by companies thusly: B G K E H C I D F A, with Weygant's Company A being deployed as skirmishers in the woods to the regiment's right, trying to cover a 100-yard gap between the 124th's right and the 86th New York's left. To the 124th's left (at least its left as the battle opened) were placed four cannons from James E. Smith's 4th New York Battery, composed of ten-pound Parrotts.⁶⁸

As the First Texas regiment slowly pressed its attack up the steep slope leading to the 124th's position, Major Cromwell pleaded with his regimental commander, Colonel Ellis, to charge. This Ellis initially refused to do. When the officers' horses were brought up, Ellis, while mounting his steed, purportedly declared, "The men must see us today," then agreed to Cromwell's request.⁶⁹ Weygant described this heady moment:

Cromwell waves his sword twice above his head, makes a lunge forward, shouts the charge, and putting spurs to his horse, dashes forward through the lines. Then men cease firing for a minute and with ready bayonets rush after him. Ellis sits in his saddle and looks on as if in proud admiration of both his loved Major and gallant sons of Orange.⁷⁰

The First Texas, according to Weygant, "broke and fled." Cromwell was jubilant, but a volley from a second line of Confederates coming up behind the First Texas "seemed in an instant to bring down a full quarter" of the 124th's men.⁷¹ Moments later, Cromwell fell from his horse, shot through the chest. Even so,



MARK UNGREALE

Ellis Monument at Gettysburg

the 124th turned back this second line before a third appeared behind it, forcing the thinning ranks of the regiment back up the slope.⁷² At this moment, Lieutenant Colonel Cummins, seeing that the 124th could no longer protect Smith's guns, tried to have them moved but was badly wounded by a shell that hit the gun carriage he was standing near.⁷³ Of the senior officers of the regiment, only Ellis remained. However, making a prominent target high up on his grey horse, he had but moments to live: "his body with a weave pitches forward, head foremost among the rocks." He had been shot just above his visor, brain matter oozing from his wound.⁷⁴ By now, the hard-pressed Third Corps had been reinforced by the Fifth Corps and parts of the Second Corps. It was time to withdraw the 124th from the ridge, which Weygant managed skillfully.⁷⁵

In addition to the three senior officers of the regiment, the 124th lost Captain Isaac Nicoll of Company G and 2nd Lieutenant Milner Brown of Company I—in all, some thirty-four killed and fifty-seven wounded.⁷⁶ As Longstreet's attack continued to push both east and north, it also smashed into Brewster's "Excelsior" brigade anxiously awaiting its fury in the Peach Orchard, just north of the 124th's position. Kingston's 120th New York was about to have its mettle tested once again. As Private Esick G. Wilber wrote to his parents, "This will be a day long to be remembered by the survivors of that terrible battle."⁷⁷

While the majority of the Excelsior Brigade was on the front line facing west along the southern edge of Emmitsburg Road, the 120th (along with the 73rd New York) found itself placed initially in reserve some 150 yards behind the main line. As Ward's brigade struggled in and around Devil's Den to the south of the 120th's position, and as De Trobriand's brigade—with assistance from Barnes' First Division of Sykes' Fifth Corps—became embroiled in the chaotic fight for the Wheatfield⁷⁸ and "Stony Hill" (just across the road from the Peach Orchard), so Sickles' hold on the Peach Orchard itself became more and more precarious. The position was being threatened not only on its left flank from the tenuous hold the Union army had in the Wheatfield—Caldwell's Second Division of Hancock's Second Corps would soon be caught in this maelstrom as well—but was threatened

in its front by the remaining brigades of McLaws' Division, Wofford's Georgians, and Barksdale's Mississippians in particular.⁷⁹ In addition, the Peach Orchard had been enfiladed by artillery fire from Longstreet's well-placed batteries since 3 p.m.⁸⁰

About half an hour into the bombardment prior to the Confederate assault, the Third Corps requested help from the Artillery Reserve. Lieutenant Colonel Freeman McGilvery, commander of the First Volunteer Brigade, Artillery Reserve, sent, among other batteries, Captain John Bigelow's 9th Massachusetts Light battery of Napoleon 12-pounder smoothbores and had posted

them about 400 yards in front of the Trostle Farm, approximately 500 yards behind the Peach Orchard and facing on the Wheatfield Road.⁸¹ McGilvery's batteries devastated Kershaw's ranks before they became prey to Barksdale's charge.⁸² Later that day they played a role in the dramatic entrance onto the field of Poughkeepsie's 150th New York regiment.⁸³

Sometime after four o'clock, Corporal Egbert Lewis of I Company, 120th New York, could see from his position in the reserve "Long line[s] of infantry...advancing towards us under a rapid fire from our batteries" posted along the Emmitsburg and Wheatfield Roads.⁸⁴ Lewis further stated that his regiment was "now alone in the reserve, the men...lying down with orders not to rise till they received the word of command."⁸⁵ Waiting for his turn to enter the fray, Private Wilber declared, "We watched the moves of the battle with anxious hearts."⁸⁶ As the remnants of Graham's regiments fled through their lines, Graham himself having been wounded and subsequently captured, the 120th's moment came: "The whole line rose as a man and poured into their ranks [probably the 18th Mississippi] such a terrible fire of musketry, as to bring them to a standstill within a few rods of us. Then for an hour or more, the dreadful crash of battle resounded."⁸⁷ Private Wilber remembered it this way:

[M]uttering a silent prayr for the preservations of my life I entered that battle field: with one wild yell we advanced on the enemy but they were comeing to strong[.] [W]e no more then advanced before we were obliged to fall



MARK MOREALE

**120th New York Monument
at Gettysburg**

back[.] [A]t this time they had a cross fire on us and they were poring in from three different ways [...] My Comrads were falling on evry side of me and I expected evry minut that it would be my turn next[.] Captain Barker [of K Company] fell shot dead instantly[.] [T]he ball went through his head just back of his ears right through his brain[.]⁸⁸

Colonel Westbrook, the 120th's commander, wrote about his experiences at Gettysburg just once, in the September 20, 1900, *National Tribune*.⁸⁹ In the article, entitled "On the Firing Line: The 120th N.Y.'s Firm Stand on the Second Day at Gettysburg," Westbrook insisted that his regiment went into action around 6:30 and that Graham's brigade was "broken up" about half an hour earlier.⁹⁰ He rightly noted that as Barksdale (rolling up Humphrey's flank along the Emmitsburg Road) was surprised by his regiment as it rose up from the low stone wall it had been laying behind, three additional Confederate brigades were bearing down upon the Army of the Potomac's center on Cemetery Ridge. These were the brigades of Major General R.H. Anderson's Division from A.P. Hill's Third Corps. As Sickles' battered Corps began its fighting retreat from Sherfy's Peach Orchard and the Emmitsburg Road area back toward Cemetery Ridge and right into the teeth of Anderson's attack,⁹¹ McGilvrey's batteries along the Wheatfield Road became extremely vulnerable. In a heroic delaying action, Bigelow's battery retreated 400 yards by prolonge, firing as it went, back to the Trostle farm before having to abandon four of its six Napoleons to the relentless 21st Mississippi, which had veered off Barksdale's main attack to capture these guns.⁹²

Barksdale's regiments had swept all before them but they had reached their zenith. Within the hour, as darkness came on, his tired men, decimated to around half their original number, could do no more. Reinforcements from the Second Corps slammed into his regiments near Plum Run, and Barksdale's day—and war—was over, his sword as well as his body shattered by a vicious volley from the 125th and 126th New York regiments of Willard's Brigade.⁹³

In the falling darkness, the 150th New York had its first moment in this horrific struggle. Quickly moving from its position on the far right of the Union line near Culp's Hill, Lockwood's Brigade was sent to shore up Sickles' patchwork line and perhaps even counterattack as Willard's Brigade had done.⁹⁴ Brigadier General Alpheus S.



150th New York Monument
at Gettysburg

Williams, who commanded the Twelfth Corps at Gettysburg, explained the role of Lockwood's Brigade at this crucial moment in an April 21, 1864, letter to John Batchelder:

Hurrying to the right up this road I soon began to pass masses of disorganized portions of the 3d Corps.... I saw nothing but broken troops until entering an open space almost surrounded by woods. I found some artillery in position. Lieut. Col. (then Major I think) [Freeman] McGilvery rushed towards me reporting that he was without [infantry] support and that the rebels but a short time before had drawn off several pieces of artillery. I directed Lockwood...to deploy and attack the woods at once, which he did promptly. Three pieces of artillery were retaken by his brigade. They were drawn off by companies of the 150th N.Y.⁹⁵

As they went into battle, quick-marching in columns of four down the Granite Schoolhouse Lane toward the Trostle farm, the men of the 150th were greeted by several wounded New Yorkers "with shouts of 'Go in, Dutchess County! Give it to them, boys! Give it to them!'"⁹⁶ By 8 p.m., they had advanced a good half-mile in front of the Union main lines with little opposition.⁹⁷ They could not stay there, of course, and as they retired, dragging three of Bigelow's guns with them, their day was done, except for the return trek to the Twelfth Corps lines, which they did not return to until somewhat before midnight. They would be terribly busy in the morning.

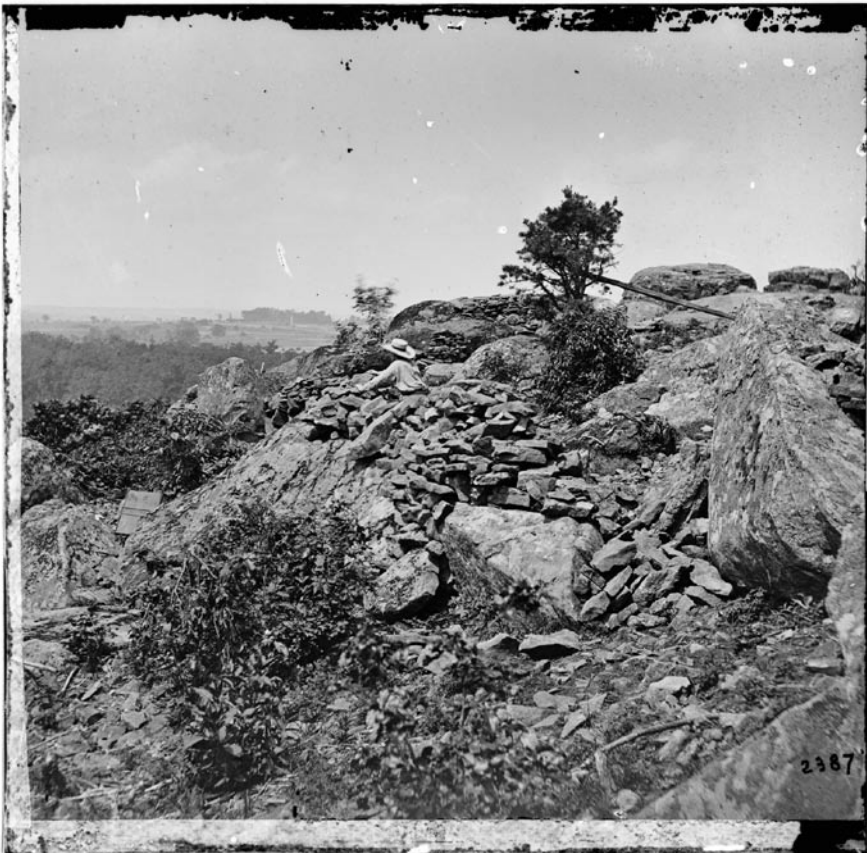
V

As the 150th New York returned to its original position within some breastworks around Culp's Hill, it was met with a nasty surprise. In their absence, their brigade commander recalled years later, enemy pickets had taken the opportunity to occupy their position. They rested on their arms. Early in the morning of July 3, they were asked to retake the ground the Corps had lost the night before.⁹⁸ Sometime after midnight, Alpheus Williams, in temporary command of the Twelfth Corps, was ordered by General Slocum to "drive them out at daylight."⁹⁹ Williams felt this task would be difficult. Having a decided advantage in artillery, he began the attack with a fifteen- or twenty-minute bombardment followed by an assault supported by Lockwood's brigade. Williams observed that, "The whole line of woods were ablaze with continuous volleys, especially on Geary's front [where the 150th had been posted], against which they hurled their columns with a most persistent determination." This firefight continued until nearly 11 a.m., "when their whole line suddenly retreated." An amazed Williams proclaimed, "This was over six

hours of almost continuous firing!"¹⁰⁰

This event was far more memorable in Richard Van Wyck's mind than the capture of the guns on Trostle's farm had been but a few hours earlier, even though that had marked his introduction to battle. In a letter to his father he confessed:

I never was on a battlefield before and the Lord preserve me from such a sight again. Some were wounded in our company and but few killed in the Regt. This was owing to the protection of breastworks behind which we did terrible execution, literally piling the Rebs up in masses. In front of our Regt. alone in one place where the enemy was agoing to charge, at least five hundred were killed and some 1700 stocks of arms captured.... I wish I could give you my impression of the scene, which was awful beyond description.¹⁰¹



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Breastworks on Little Round Top, Gettysburg

The 150th's service at Gettysburg had come to an end with relatively few casualties, but the long third and final day of the Battle of Gettysburg was just beginning.¹⁰²

The 20th New York State Militia had, for the most part, rested on the second day of battle, aside from helping repulse Anderson's unsupported attack on the center of the line late in the day. Around 11 a.m., as the battle for Culp's Hill quieted down behind them, the men of the 20th complained of the heat. Soldiers speculated about what would happen next. They did not have long to wait.

Lieutenant Colonel Jacob Broadhead Hardenburgh of the 20th surveyed the position his regiment found itself in, some 300 yards to the right of what became the most famous copse of trees in nineteenth-century America—the point at which Pickett's Charge was shortly destined to converge. Around noon, Hardenburgh, concerned that his men had not yet eaten, requested rations, but General Doubleday told him nothing could be done for them. An attack, he was told, was expected soon. Indeed, an hour later, the famous cannonade preceding Pickett's Charge commenced. The men of the 20th, Hardenburgh recalled, “were smoking and joking while they [Stannard's Vermont Brigade, situated to the regiment's left] lay there hugging the ground and big drops of perspiration stood out on their foreheads and faces.”¹⁰³ They endured this barrage for upwards of two terrifying hours. Colonel Gates called the bombardment “a tempest of shot and shell.”¹⁰⁴ Even so, some members of the regiment's color guard displayed reckless bravado by waving the regimental colors at the Confederates, taunting them to advance. As the thirteen Confederate brigades came closer and began their oblique rush toward the clump of trees, the 20th and 151st Pennsylvania—Colonel Theodore Gates' demi-brigade—swung their lines to the right (as Stannard's Vermonters also did). Posting themselves atop a hill in front of the copse of trees, they poured volley after volley into the exposed flank of the oncoming but rapidly thinning Confederate lines.¹⁰⁵

A Union soldier serving in the 8th Ohio posted on the opposite flank of the Union line from the 20th New York vividly remembered the moment when the Union infantry rose as one and opened up on the packed Confederate formations, a sight that must have equally impressed the men of the 20th on the left flank: “Arms, heads, blankets, guns and knapsacks were thrown into the air. Their track, as they advanced, was strewn with dead and wounded. A moan went up from the field, distinct to be heard amid the storm of battle, but on they went.”¹⁰⁶ And as they came yet nearer, the 20th's Major Walter A. Van Rensselaer, who had slept fitfully on the night of the second “with a stone for a pillow,” closed with the enemy in his immediate front. In his diary that evening, he noted that the

regiment:

followed up along the fence pouring in a tremendous fire...when near a slash of timber,¹⁰⁷ I discovered a Rebel flag behind the fence in the hands of an officer—I demanded its surrender—he replied, “not by a d__d sight” and fired at me with his revolver, wounding me in the small of the back. I lunged at him with my saber when he fired again, the ball striking my saber scabbard—five or six of my boys came to the rescue and he surrendered, followed by his whole regiment—they came over the fence like a flock of sheep—think we captured at least 1500 prisoners. Soon after[,] a shell burst directly over and very near my head knocking me senseless.¹⁰⁸

Colonel Gates concluded that “I lost during the three days, three officers killed, fifteen wounded and one taken prisoner, [enlisted] men killed, thirty-two, wounded ninety-six, and twenty-three were taken prisoners.... My loss in killed and wounded was two-thirds of my officers and half of my men.”¹⁰⁹ For the rest of his life, he was justifiably proud of the praise heaped upon him by his divisional commander, Abner Doubleday, concerning the conduct of the demi-brigade during the battle.¹¹⁰

VI

“I tell you,” wrote Confederate Lieutenant John Dooley in his journal just before participating in Pickett’s Charge, “there is no romance in making one of these charges. You might think so...but when you rise to your feet...the enthusiasm of ardent breasts in many cases *ain’t there*, and instead of burning to avenge the insults of our country, families and altars and firesides, the thought is most frequently, Oh, if I could just come out of this charge safely how thankful *would I be!*”¹¹¹ Indeed, all the romance of the war had ended the moment Pickett’s Charge did, despite the claims of Lost Cause advocates after the war like Jubal Early. The aftermath of that disastrous charge was a sight that haunted many a participant years after the war. Captain Benjamin W. Thompson, Company F, 111th New York, captured the scene in all its horror:

The track of the great charge was marked by bodies of men in all possible positions, wounded, bleeding, dying and dead. Near the line where the final struggle occurred, the men lay in heaps, the wounded wriggling and groaning under the weight of the dead among whom they were entangled. In my weak and exhausted condition I could not long endure the gory, ghastly spectacle. I found my head reeling, the tears flowing, and my stomach sick at the sight.¹¹²



Pickett's Field, Gettysburg National Military Park

What remained now was caring for the wounded and burying the often bloated and distorted bodies of the dead. It is no wonder that Henry Howell of the 124th New York declared, "I hope I may never have an opportunity to do so again" after being detailed to bury his regiment's dead scattered about Devil's Den. (They had arrived at an advanced stage of putrefaction, having sat under a broiling sun for two days.¹¹³) The battlefield ghouls had no doubt been out on this part of line as they had been in front of the Union center. As Sergeant T.P. Meyer noted: "It was a rare occurrence to find one who had not been robbed by the battlefield bandit or robber of the dead.... The battlefield robbers were well known by the large amounts of money they had, and the watches, pocketbooks, pocket knives, and other valuable trinkets they had for sale after the battle. All regiments had them."¹¹⁴

The wounded suffered terribly over the next several days. As Captain Weygant observed:

The scene at the [Third Corps] hospital was one of the most horrid imaginable. During the afternoon and evening nearly three thousand wounded men had been brought there, and others were continually arriving. The ground of the entire grove, which was several acres in extent, seemed to be literally covered with them; and such noises filled the air as I had never heard before and trust may never reach my ears again.... Away down through the trees flickering lights could be seen, the reflections of which fell with ghastly effect upon the corps of surgeons who with coats off, and sleeves rolled up, were gathered at, or moving rapidly to and fro about the amputating tables."

Even this battle-hardened veteran “could endure no more” of these sights and sounds, especially the eerie melancholy rhythm of saw on bone. He fled with a profound sense of shame.¹¹⁵

A few days after the battle, an inexperienced volunteer nurse named Cornelia Hancock arrived at Gettysburg. Appalled by what she saw there, she shattered all the high-flown rhetoric imposed on what this conflict might have meant:

A sickening, overpowering, awful stench announced the presence of the unburied dead...until it seemed to possess a palpable horrible density that could be seen and felt and cut with a knife. Not the presence of the dead bodies themselves, swollen and disfigured as they were, and lying in heaps on every side, was as awful to the spectator as that deadly, nauseating atmosphere which robbed the battlefield of its glory, the survivors of their victory, and the wounded of what little chance of life was left to them.¹¹⁶

VII

While his 120th New York was sustaining upwards of forty-five percent casualties at Gettysburg, hospital cook Lewis Coe Bevier had managed to wrangle a pass to Washington, D.C., where he visited the Smithsonian, the Capitol, the White House, and other sites of interest. However, he had kept up with the momentous events occurring in Pennsylvania and had heard how the 124th New York—a sister regiment of his own—had been badly “cut up,” as well as the fact that one of his friends from the 120th, Charles DuBois, had been counted among the missing. Many more he knew had been killed or wounded. As he so succinctly put it, “I suppose their isent many left in our regiment.”¹¹⁷

But what had happened to Charley DuBois? His story represents the fate of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of others. On September 27, Dr. John N. Miller, an assistant surgeon of the 120th New York, replied to a friend:

You asked me about Charley DuBois. I can only say that I think he is safe either in some hospital or with some farmer in Pennsylvania. I have been asked about him more than a dozen times by people from the Landing [now Highland, New York]. The only possible way that he may have been killed and buried unknown, is, that he may have been forced into some other regiment during the fight, which is always done with those who get lost from their own regiment during a fight. He certainly was not killed or wounded or taken prisoner from our regiment. I advise his folks not to be too worried about it for I think he will turn up sooner or later.¹¹⁸

Unbeknownst to Dr. Miller, DuBois' body had been found by a comrade, Ezekiel H. Winter; with the help of others, he had buried him on the field of Gettysburg months before Miller's letter had been written.¹¹⁹ This fact was not publicly known until a regimental chaplain published a history of the 120th New York in the 1890s.¹²⁰

Note: For their assistance in locating numerous sources, I would especially like to thank Eric Roth, Archivist/Librarian of the Huguenot Historical Society; Lynn Lucas, Local History Librarian of the Adriance Memorial Library; and John Heiser, Historian for the Gettysburg National Military Park Library. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not also mention Seward Osborne who kept me on the straight and narrow regarding numerous details of the 20th New York's experiences at Gettysburg.

Endnotes

1. Lewis Coe *Bevier Civil War Letters (1862-1922)*. Huguenot Historical Society. New Paltz, NY.
2. Weygant, Charles H. *History of the 124 Regiment of New York State Volunteers: The Orange Blossom Regiment*. (1877). Celina, OH: Ironclad Pub., 2002.
3. Van Santvoord, C. *One Hundred and Twentieth Regiment New York State Volunteers: A Narrative of its Services in the War for the Union*. (1894). Saugerties: Hope Farm Press, 1997.
4. Sears, Stephen W. *Chancellorsville*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.
5. Weygant, 92-95.
6. Out of the four regiments being considered here, 478 of their men died in combat and 513 died by disease. A larger sample of regiments from the Hudson Valley yields a starker contrast. Looking at the statistics of some 25 units recruited from the area reveals the following: out of 5,248 fatalities recorded for these regiments almost 3,000 were by disease. Not surprisingly, far more officers died in combat than died by disease (144 to 44), while with the enlisted men this ratio is reversed (2,141 by combat to 2,919 by disease). Better living conditions for the officers no doubt account for this fact, just as the nature of Civil War combat dictated that officers show an inordinate amount of courage under fire, often risking their own lives in order to boost their men's morale.
7. Weygant, 103-05.
8. Weygant, 106.
9. Weygant, 107. Colonel Ellis has been described as "a stern and profane disciplinarian" who trained his men well. The 124th was not his first regiment, however, having trained and help recruit the 56th New York before joining the 124th and having, previous to that, served as Captain in the 71st New York Militia at First Bull Run (McGinnis, Amanda and Cynthia Rapp. "Our Name is Legion! Was the Proud Boast of the 56th New York Volunteers." *America's Civil War* (September 1990): 10, 62-66.)
10. LaRocca, Charles L. "Forward My Tulips!": The Daredevil Orange Blossoms at Chancellorsville." *Civil War Magazine* 48 (December 1994) 40-43, 52-57.
11. Weygant, 111-13. Sears, in his *Chancellorsville*, carefully examines the wounding of Jackson in a chapter entitled "The Fate of Stonewall Jackson" (282-309) and comes to the conclusion that Jackson was inadvertently shot by his own nervous men.
12. LaRocca, 42. In actuality, the 124th lost 57 killed, 146 wounded, and 6 missing in this struggle

(Weygant 127-29). Many of the missing in this battle shared a peculiarly horrible fate. Westbrook estimates that on top of the 3,439 killed and wounded suffered by the Third Corps, some 600 additional men, listed as missing, were “burned in the woods, where a conflagration kindled by the combat, licked up the wounded and the dead” (quoted in Van Santvoord 52).

13. Quoted in Van Santvoord, 51-2.
14. Van Santvoord, 53, 54.
15. Van Santvoord, 57.
16. Weygant, 116-17. In a newspaper article concerning, in part, the frantic fighting on the 3rd, Sergeant Charles Stewart of Company I, 124th New York, noted that, “The barrel of my gun was so hot I could scarcely touch it. I fired 22 rounds when a ball struck me on the head above the right eye. I felt the sting but thought nothing of it till I saw the blood pouring, then I made up my mind that the ball must have entered the skull, and the wound was mortal” (LaRocca, 54). Miraculously, he would live to serve at Gettysburg. As a Lieutenant, however, Stewart’s luck ran out. He was captured at Talapotomy Creek on June 1, 1864 (Weygant, 352).
17. Color guards were essential to battlefield cohesion as units needed a point of reference to dress on and rally around when maneuvering on a smoke-filled battlefield punctuated with the deafening sounds of artillery and small arms fire. Color guards often suffered inordinately high casualties, being that the colors made a rather conspicuous target, and that to take a regiment’s colors was considered a feat of valor at the time.
18. *United States War Department. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. 70 Volumes in 128 Parts. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901. Series 1, Vol. 27, Pts. 1, 3.*
19. Weygant, 120.
20. Weygant, 121.
21. Weygant, 122. Captain C.A. Stevens also briefly mentions this incident in his history, *Berdan’s United States Sharpshooters in the Army of the Potomac 1861-1865* (Morningside reprint, 1984), 269.
22. See Sears’ *Chancellorsville*, 509-11, where he discusses some of the connections between the Orange Blossoms’ experiences and those of Crane’s protagonists Jim Conklin and Henry Fleming. For a very different perspective, see Stephen Cushman’s *Bloody Promenade: Reflections on a Civil War Battle* (University Press of Virginia 1999), especially chapter 19, entitled, “Fictions,” 207-29, *passim*.
23. Van Wyck, Richard T. *A War to Petrify the Heart: The Civil War Letters of a Dutchess County, N.Y. Volunteer*. Ed. Virginia Hughes Kaminsky. Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 1997.
24. Van Wyck, 97.
25. Van Wyck, 98. On June 13, 1863, the Confederates cleared the Shenandoah Valley of Federal troops when Ewell’s Second Corps (Ewell had replaced Jackson) defeated Milroy at Winchester. Two days later, Confederate cavalry reached Chambersburg, Pennsylvania (Van Santvoord, 61). Meanwhile, Hooker’s army still languished opposite Fredericksburg (Van Santvoord, 63).
26. Van Wyck, 100.
27. “Oration by Maj. Henry A. Gildersleeve,” *New York at Gettysburg, Vol. III*, 1032, as seen in Fox, William F., comp. and ed. *Final Report on the Battlefield of Gettysburg: New York Monuments Commission for the Battlefields of Gettysburg and Chattanooga*. 3 vols. Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1902.
28. Weygant, 133.
29. Weygant, 139, 144-53. Colonel Ellis had ordered Weygant to “make a determined stand—hold them at all hazards until reinforcements can be brought to you,” and this he did (Weygant, 146).

30. Weygant, 160-61.
31. Weygant summarizes these movements on 162-69.
32. Weygant, 169.
33. Plank, Will. *Banners and Bugles: A Record of Ulster County, New York and the Mid-Hudson Region in the Civil War*. Marlborough, NY: Centennial Press, 1972.
34. Plank, 13.
35. In actuality, Hooker's army and its Third Corps was much closer to Washington and had not yet crossed the Potomac River. They would not reach the vicinity of Harper's Ferry until the 25th of June (Van Santvoord, 64).
36. Lewis Coe Bevier to his parents. June 19, 1863. Huguenot Historical Society Collection; transcribed copy in the 120th New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library.
37. Quoted in Van Santvoord, 66.
38. Stackpole, Edward J. *They Met at Gettysburg*. Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1956. On 116-18, provides a convenient chart delineating the times various units approximately arrived on the field. Accurate time, like accurate casualty figures, remains illusive at this distance. As Roland R. Maust so judiciously reminds us in his recent work, *Grappling With Death: The Union Second Corps Hospital at Gettysburg* (Morningside, 2001), "timekeeping was a relative, and not an exact science for the individual soldier, especially between the Union troops and their Southern counterparts, who set their timepieces to widely divergent chronometers" (154fn4).
39. There is apparently some controversy surrounding Reynolds' death, a controversy which continued to stir up a good deal of emotion well into the early twentieth century. See, for example, the following articles from the *National Tribune*: "Death of Gen Reynolds. It came from a Volley, and Not From a Sharpshooter" by Thomas S. Hopkins, formerly of the 16th Maine (April 14, 1910), a response to another article entitled "With Gen. Reynolds When Killed," and "Death of Gen Reynolds. An Ex-Confederate Who Was a Witness Describes the Event" by E.T. Boland, who had served in Company F of the 13th Alabama (May 20, 1915). Both articles have been republished in Richard A. Sauers, ed., *Fighting Them Over: How the Veterans Remembered Gettysburg in the Pages of the National Tribune* (Butternut and Blue, 1998), 71-72, 73.
40. Fox, William F., comp. and ed. *Final Report on the Battlefield of Gettysburg: New York Monuments Commission for the Battlefields of Gettysburg and Chattanooga*. 3 vols. Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, 1902. The battlefield monument inscription of the 80th New York [20th New York State Militia], however, claims the regiment went into combat with 375 men all told (640).
41. The following paragraphs summarize information from three separate but similar accounts by Colonel Theodore Gates. These accounts include his immediate field report of the battle, dated July 2 and written atop Cemetery Ridge, where his brigade had retreated the night before: OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXVII/1 [S# 43], 317; his somewhat more expansive account that he provided both General Doubleday and John Bachelder from Brandy Station, Virginia, January 30, 1864: see David L. and Audrey J. Ladd, eds., *The Bachelder Papers: Gettysburg in Their Own Words. Vol. I, January 5, 1863 to July 27, 1880* (Dayton, OH: New Hampshire Historical Society-Morningside, 1994), 80-86; and a more expansive and retrospective version of the same, Theodore Gates, *The "Ulster Guard" [20th N. Y. State Militia] and the War of the Rebellion...* (New York: Benjamin H. Tyrrel, 1879), 432-35, 440-50.

John Bachelder (1825-1894) was a New Hampshire artist and historian with a great interest in military affairs. He began collecting information about the battle almost as soon as it ended. As his editors write: "He visited field hospitals around the town, interviewed wounded soldiers of both armies, and gained information that enabled him to mark on his map the positions of every unit engaged during the battle." He then collected, through additional interviews and correspondence, hundreds of first-hand accounts of the battle from participants serving in The Army of the Potomac, even while the war continued to be waged, a practice he continued over the

next few decades. This collection of materials, amounting to three published volumes—which did not appear in print until 1994—plus other unpublished materials is an invaluable source of historical material about the battle (Ladd and Ladd 9-14).

42. V5-Clark, John D.S.—Personal Reminiscences of Gettysburg by Captain John D.S. Cook, 20th N.Y.S.M. 80th New York Volunteer Infantry Volunteers. December 12, 1903.
43. Gates does not mention the ridge by name, calling it only “the first ridge west of it [Seminary Ridge],” in his January 1864 letter to Bachelder (81).
44. Gates, Theodore B. *The “Ulster Guard” [20th N.Y. State Militia] and the War of the Rebellion*. New York: Benjamin H. Tyrell, 1879.
45. Gates variously described the farm as a “house and out-buildings” and more formidably as “a brick house and stone barn.” The former description appears in *The “Ulster Guard,”* the latter in the July 2nd O.R. report. Pfanz in his remarkable history *Gettysburg—the First Day* (University of North Carolina Press), catalogues the Harmon property, aside from the large nine-room house itself, as having a “stone barn, a two-story brick washhouse, a smokehouse, and a corncrib” (273). Baldwin’s small force took possession of all these structures.
46. Pfanz, Harry W. *Gettysburg—The First Day*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. On 273, locates the Harmon farm as being “about 700 yards west of Gates’ position on McPherson’s Ridge, 250 yards west of Willoughby Run, and about 400 yards east of the Confederate position in Springs Hotel Woods.” Gates speculated that it was about one-eighth of a mile beyond the run in July 2 O.R. report but describes it as being “some thirty rods beyond the Run” in *The “Ulster Guard”* (433).
47. Baldwin did not have long to celebrate his heroic efforts; he was killed during Picket’s Charge two days later (Gates, *The “Ulster Guard”* 433).
48. Quoted in Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The First Day*, 273. Pfanz later explains how the women “fled from the burning house,” set afire by Heth’s Confederates who finished the job K Company had begun. Fleeing toward the Confederate lines because of the intensity of the battle raging in the other direction, the Harmon women would eventually find themselves under the protection of a *London Times* correspondent covering the war from the Confederate side, who saw their needs were cared for until the battle ended (279). See also, Richard Wheeler, *Witness to Gettysburg* (Meridian-NAL, 1987), 143-46, for additional details about this incident.
49. Gates, *The “Ulster Guard,”* 433-34.
50. Gates, *The “Ulster Guard,”* 435, estimates Union forces at less than 9,000 and the Confederates at around 18,000. Weygant, taking into consideration the numbers of the Army of the Potomac’s XI Corps, which fought to the right of Reynolds’ First Corps, and the entire weight of the Army of Northern Virginia’s II Corps under Ewell engaged against Howard’s XI Corps, estimates that the Union army’s 22,000 men were opposed on the first day at Gettysburg by as many as 50,000 Confederates (172).
51. Gates, *The “Ulster Guard,”* 435.
52. Cook, 326.
53. Gates, *The “Ulster Guard,”* 441-42.
54. Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The First Day*, for example, suggests Pettigrew’s brigade alone lost over 1,000 men here, just as the Division he belonged to—Heth’s—lost over 2,300 men in thirty minutes (292). It is not surprising therefore for Plank to conclude that the 20th sustained their heaviest losses of the war at Gettysburg, suffering 170 casualties overall (Plank, 17).
55. Gates, Jan. 30, 1864, letter to John Bachelder, Ladd, David L. and Audrey J. Ladd, eds. *The Bachelder Papers: Gettysburg in Their Own Words*. Vols. I-III. Dayton, OH: Morningside-New Hampshire Historical Society, 1994
56. Cook, after describing the chaotic retreat through Gettysburg—he having at one point to wade through the offal of a pig sty—laments the remains of his small company, which, in the fight

and subsequent retreat, was reduced from 27 men to 5 (329-30).

57. "Oration by Maj. Henry A. Gildersleeve," *New York at Gettysburg*, Vol. III, 1032-33.
58. Ladd, David L. and Audrey J. Ladd, eds. *The Bachelder Papers: Gettysburg in Their Own Words*. Vols. I-III. Dayton, OH: Morningside-New Hampshire Historical Society, 1994.
59. Van Wyck, 111. He was also quickly learning the fine art of foraging. Confederate soldiers, of course, reported similar experiences as they adapted to the soldier's life. Private Carleton McCarthy of the Richmond Howitzers, for example, in an article published in the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, II.3 (Sept. 1876), 129-35, entitled "Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia" details—with a good deal of self-deprecating humor—how he too learned to lighten his load while marching.
60. Van Santvoord, 72. Weygant, 170. In "*The Ulster Guard*," Gates bitterly complains that Sickles 'Third Corps should have been able to come to the First Corps' aid on July 1, being but only ten miles away at Emmitsburg (448-50). He perhaps did not take into account the exhaustion of Sickles' Corps at the time.
61. Weygant, 172. Peter B. Ayers, Adjutant of the 99th Pennsylvania, concluded in a February 1886 article in the *National Tribune* that this was "one of the hardest marches it was ever our lot [Ward's brigade] to be engaged in," further noting that in 90-degree heat the brigade took but one fifteen minute "breathing spell" during the 12-mile trek. "The water in the canteens," he observed, "was almost steaming hot" (Sauers, 242).
62. "Letter of Capt. Samuel C. Armstrong," to John Bachelder, February 6, 1884, *Bachelder Papers*, Vol. II, 1000.
63. Weygant, 173.
64. Breastworks, for example, were used extensively at the Wilderness (May 5-7, 1864), Spotsylvania Court House (May 8-18, 1864), and Cold Harbor (June 1-12, 1864), and eventually evolved into the extensive trenches of the Siege of Petersburg (lasting from June 1864 through April 1865).
65. Weygant, 174. Lieutenant Colonel Cummins notes that heavy skirmishing between Berdan's 2nd Sharp Shooters and Longstreet's advancing columns began around 2:30. Stevens, C.A. *Berdan's United States Sharpshooters in the Army of the Potomac, 1861-1865*. (1892). Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1984. On 321-23, Stevens describes the important role the small contingent of Berdan's men played in delaying Longstreet's advance toward the Round Tops situated 500 yards behind the 124th's position on Houck's Ridge.
66. The 124th's brigade commander, Hobart Ward, made the following estimate of the odds facing his 1,500-man brigade: "For nearly two hours my brigade was opposed to at least 10,000 of the enemy, in line and *en masse*.... The total loss in my brigade was 46 officers and 712 enlisted men" (quoted in Stevens, C. A. *Berdan's United States Sharpshooters in the Army of the Potomac, 1861-1865*. (1892). Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1984.)
67. Pfanz, Harry W. *Gettysburg—The Second Day*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987, notes that the 124th had but 18 officers and 220 enlisted men in line on July 2. Lieutenant Colonel Cummins (*The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. II, 1023), remembers the total as 240.
68. In Lieutenant Colonel Cummins February 21, 1886, letter to John Bachelder (*The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. II, 1023), he misidentifies Smith's guns as 20-lb Parrotts. A Parrott rifled cannon, developed by Robert Parrott, was an accurate gun "made of cast iron rather than costly bronze" as the popular 12-pounder "Napoleon" smoothbore was. "A Parrott could hit a target at 2,500 yards, about twice the range of a smoothbore gun" (Editors of Time-Life Books. *Echoes of Glory: Arms and Equipment of the Union*. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1991. 300.)
69. Weygant, 175-76.
70. Weygant, 176.
71. Weygant, 176.

72. These second and third lines were apparently the regiments of Brigadier Henry L. Bennings' Georgia brigade, of Major General John Bell Hood's Division, consisting of the 2nd, 15th, 17th, and 20th Georgia (Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 190).
73. Weygant, 176-77.
74. Weygant, 177. First Lieutenant H.P. Ramsdell spent the next week accompanying Ellis's and Cromwell's bodies, carefully packed in ice when arriving in Westminster, back to their distraught families in New York and Newburgh, respectively. See Ramsdell's report on these activities in Weygant, 198-200.
75. Those interested in a Confederate version of these events might wish to consult the *Southern Historical Society Papers*, iv.4 (October 1877), 161-84, which includes the reports of Brigadier Generals Robertson and Benning, among others from Hood's division.
76. Weygant, 187. Nicoll's story is particularly poignant. In an 1884 account entitled, *Reminiscences of the War; or incidents in and About Chambersburg, During the War of the Rebellion*, author J. Hoke describes how a Confederate officer, Lieutenant R.W. Wood, had found Captain Nicoll's pocket testament upon the captain's body and agreed to have the testament returned to Nicoll's family living in Blooming Grove, New York, after having read a note within it that requested such a service should Captain Nicoll be killed. John, the Captain's father, was very grateful for this memento of his slain son, who had been "pierced by three balls—one in his neck, one in his shoulder, and one in his breast" (Union Regiment Files, 6-NY124 124th New York Inf. Reg., Gettysburg National Military Park).
77. Letter of Esick G. Wilber to his parents. July 10, 1863. Murray J. Smith Collection (U.S. Army Military History Institute). Copied at Gettysburg National Military Park, Union Regiment Files. 6-NY120 120th New York Inf. Reg. A note appended to the letter explains that "Wilber was captured in Oct. 1863" and died 11 months later in Andersonville Prison, Georgia.
78. They were confronting Kershaw's brigade of McLaw's Division from one direction and Anderson's brigade from Hood's Division from another.
79. These brigades included Cobbs' and Phillips' Georgia Legions, the 16th, 18th, and 24th Georgia, and the 13th, 17th, 18th, and 21st Mississippi.
80. For a detailed account of the events leading up to the 120th's involvement on the second day of Gettysburg, see Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, chapters 11 (241-66) and 12 (267-302).
81. Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 307.
82. Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 321.
83. Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 62-63, describes the Dutchess County regiment "as large as they were inexperienced." Pfan continues, "Although Lockwood's men [Lockwood being the 150th's brigade commander] were short on campaign experience, they were well disciplined and excited about the prospects of a battle. Time would show them to be an asset to the [Twelfth] corps."
84. Quoted in Van Santvoord, 73. These were no doubt the brigades of Wofford and Barksdale.
85. Quoted in Van Santvoord, 74. The other regiment of the Excelsior Brigade in reserve, the 73rd New York, according to its Company H commander—2nd Lieutenant Frank E. Moran—was "ordered to move toward at double-quick through a shower of bullets and bursting shells." See page 41 of Campbell, Eric. "Hell in a Peach Orchard." *America's Civil War* (July 2003): 38-44. This movement had to be around 5 o'clock or even 5:30 because Moran could still see the smoke of battle from Devil's Den, and Graham's brigade was already fully engaged by the time the 73rd advanced. Barksdale's Mississippians quickly flanked and overwhelmed the 73rd in its futile attempt to stabilize Graham's line near the Sherfy barn. See also Pfan, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 323, 331.
86. Letter of Esick G. Wilber to his parents. July 10, 1863. Murray J. Smith Collection (U.S. Army Military History Institute). Copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.

87. Quoted in Van Santvoord, 74. Colonel William R. Brewster, commander of the Excelsior Brigade, suggests this action occurred sometime after 5:30. See “No. 169—Report of Col. William R. Brewster,” O.R., Ser. 1, Vol. XXVII/1 [S# 43], 560. It is questionable that the 120th could have held this position for as much as an hour, though. Some members of the regiment claim they were only able to get off a few rounds before retiring, which Wilber’s account suggests as well.
88. All bracketed commentary my own. Letter of Esick G. Wilber to his parents. July 10, 1863. Murray J. Smith Collection (U.S. Army Military History Institute). Copied at Gettysburg National Military Park. Although worded somewhat differently, this account is essentially the same as that recorded by Wilber in his diary. See Civil War Diary Kept by Eseck G. Wilber. 120th Reg. N.Y.S. Vols. Company K. Transcribed copy in 120th New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library.
89. Westbrook was shot through the pelvis, a painful wound that bothered him the rest of his life. He was discharged from the service on February 20, 1864. War Letters. Copied from the files of the Fredericksburg-Spotsylvania National Military Park. Transcribed copy in 120th New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library.
90. Sauer, Richard A. and James L. McLean, Jr., eds. *Fighting Them Over: How the Veterans Remembered Gettysburg in the Pages of the National Tribune*. Butternut and Blue Press, 1998. Meade by this time had lost his Second Corps commander (Sickles), his right leg shattered at the knee by a solid round shot. The leg was eventually amputated. See Pfanz, *Gettysburg: The Second Day*, 332-34. Westbrook’s account essentially conforms to that of Major General George H. Sharpe, who dedicated the 120th’s monument at Gettysburg in 1889. Sharp’s account might be found in one of two places: in Volume II of *New York at Gettysburg*, 814-24 and C. Van Santvoord’s *The One Hundred and Twentieth Regiment NYS Volunteers in the Civil War*, 218-32.
91. Westbrook puts the time of Anderson’s attack at around 7 p.m.
92. See Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 338-44 for a fine narrative account of Bigelow’s ordeal. Stephen Sears clearly explains what to retire by prolonge firing meant: “Captain Bigelow realized that the Rebels would quickly overrun his guns if he stopped firing long enough to limber up. Instead, the prolonge, or towing rope, was hooked between gun trail and limber, allowing the piece to be dragged away without undue delay [after each recoil of the gun upon firing]” Sears, *Gettysburg* (Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 308-09.
93. Sauer, Richard A. and James L. McLean, Jr., eds. *Fighting Them Over: How the Veterans Remembered Gettysburg in the Pages of the National Tribune*. Butternut and Blue Press, 1998.
94. Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 408.
95. Letter of Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams. Tallahoma, April 21, 1864. *The Bachelor Papers, Vol. I*, 163-64. McGilvery had put together a new line of artillery 900 or so yards east of the Trostle farm but without infantry support it could not successfully withstand a determined Confederate attack. Luckily for McGilvery’s batteries and Lockwood’s brigade, the Confederates on this part of the field were in full retreat when Williams’ arrived.
96. Pfanz, *Gettysburg—The Second Day*, 408. “Oration by Maj. Henry A. Gildersleeve,” *New York at Gettysburg, Vol. III*, 1033. Neither Pfanz nor Gildersleeve identifies these anonymous New Yorkers, but who would be able to identify the 150th and their affiliation with Dutchess County except other Hudson Valley regiments? Could these have been wounded from the 124th or 120th? I suspect so, for all the wounded they met seem to have been from the Third Corps.
97. Colonel William P. Maulsby of the First Regiment, Potomac Home Guard, Maryland Volunteers (whose regiment went into action with the 150th New York) states that the brigade “charged at a double-quick, past the base of Little Round Top, over the Wheatfield, to, and ending only at, the ravine beyond the Wheatfield, more than half a mile beyond the Union line.” See “Address by Col. William P. Maulsby,” *New York At Gettysburg, Vol. III*, 1042.
98. “Address by Gen. H. H. Lockwood,” *New York at Gettysburg, Vol. III*, 1040.

99. "Letter of Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams." Camden, Ark., Nov. 10th, 1865. *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. I, 219.
100. "Letter of Brig. Gen. Alpheus Williams." Camden, Ark., Nov. 10th, 1865. *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. I, 220-21. By comparison, the 124th and 120th New York fought for only half that time against Longstreet's Corps.
101. Van Wyck, 106. Major Gildersleeve notes that the 150th took over 200 prisoners during this morning fight and that each man expended more than 200 rounds of ammunition. See Henry A. Gildersleeve, "New York at Gettysburg," Vol. III, 1034.
102. Pfanz, in *Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill* (University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 307, notes that "The 150th had only eight fatalities in the course of its adventure on Culp's Hill. Pvt. Charles Howgate was one of the first. As he stepped back from the works for some ammunition, a ball tore through the top of his head. The same bullet struck two other men, Privates John P. Wing and Levi Rust, and killed them too. Wing was standing behind Rust, and they both dropped at the same time."
103. Stannard's Vermont Brigade were nine-months men but they would, despite their inexperience, have much to say about the outcome of Pickett's Charge that day. Union Regiment File V6-NY80 IN. Transcribed and copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.
104. "Letter of Col. Theodore B. Gates," Headquarters 20th N.Y.S.M., Brandy Station, Va., Jan. 30, 1864. *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. I, 84.
105. Hardenburgh and Gates tell essentially the same story of the regiment's rightward movement toward and in front of the clump of trees.
106. Quoted in Maust, Richard R. *Grappling With Death: The Union Second Corps Hospital at Gettysburg*. Dayton, OH: Morningside, 2001.
107. This slash of timber had been piled here by artillery crews, apparently trying to clear trees in their front to create a better field of fire.
108. Union Regiment File V6-NY80 IN. Transcribed and copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.
109. "Letter of Col. Theodore B. Gates," Headquarters 20th N.Y.S.M., Brandy Station, Va., Jan. 30, 1864. *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. I, 86.
110. Gates, that prolific chronicler of the 20th New York State Militia's experiences, wrote numerous times about his regiment's conduct on this third day, including his report in the *Official Records*, Ser.1, Vol. XXVII/1 [#43], 317-20 (July 4, 1863), in a letter to John Bachelder, *The Bachelder Papers*, Vol. I (Jan. 30, 1864), in a letter to Hardenburgh (December 18, 1875), in his history of the 20th entitled, *The "Ulster Guard"* (Benjamin H. Tyrell, 1879), and in his address at the dedication of the 80th New York monument at Gettysburg, *New York at Gettysburg*, Vol. II, 41-44 (October 4, 1888), and elsewhere.
111. Quoted in Maust, 185, Dooley's emphasis.
112. Quoted in Maust, 245.
113. Union Regiment File V6-NY124 IN. Transcribed and copied at Gettysburg National Military Park.
114. Quoted in Maust, 276.
115. Weygant, 183.
116. Quoted in Maust, 376.
117. Lewis Coe Bevier to his parents. July 18, 1863. Huguenot Historical Society Collection; transcribed copy in the 120th New York Infantry Vertical File, Gettysburg National Military Park Library The 120th suffered by far the highest total casualties of the other regiments in the Excelsior Brigade: 30 killed (including seven officers), and 155 wounded, in addition to 19 missing (O.R., Series I, Vol. XXVII/1).

118. Dr. John N. Miller to Friend Benjamin. September 27, 1863. Huguenot Historical Society Collection.

119. Van Santvoord, 292.

120. Van Santvoord, 292. Miller himself had his own Gettysburg story to tell. In a letter dated August 17, 1863, he readily admits his experience was more than he had bargained for:

I was at work in the rear of the fight when our men began to fall back and the rebels began to advance so that their shell and shot were falling in the lot where we were quite thick and at last we had to dodge and buck so much at whizzing shell that we were compelled to move the hospital half a mile back. Then of course our corps ambulances did not know where to bring the wounded.

The medical director after looking at the group of surgeons about him ordered me to mount his horse, go to the front and direct the ambulances. Of course I had to go, but I will admit I would have sold out my berth very cheap.

As I got to the rear of our line of battle there was a tremendous cannonading [sic] the solid shot would strike the ground, throw the dirt 10 or 15 feet high plow a long furrow and bound on 500 yards farther[;] after they struck and bounded I could almost always see them, but not before. All you know about them before, is, that you hear a tremendous, hissing and whizzing in the air like a thousand snakes. It was worse directly in the rear of our men than in the ranks, for the rebel shot and shell are always aimed too high. Well after I had done my message and was about returning, something went past me with a sound of a whirlwind. I reckon if I had straightened my arm out I would have "caught it." My horse sprang sideways against a stone wall and came near breaking my neck by falling over it. Thank providence I am all right so far—

Article from *The Palmetto Herald*, Port Royal, S.C., Thursday, June 23, 1864
From the archives of the Senate House State Historic Site

Rebel Oppression of British Subjects: Statement of a Deserter

The following is from a copy of a letter now on file at the Headquarters of this Department. The writer is an intelligent man, and his statement, written familiarly to an intimate acquaintance, bears every evidence of truth. The letter though written some months since, has not, we believe, been before published.

Folly Island, S.C., Feb., 1864

Dear Old Friend,—Doubtless you have e'en now considered me as amongst the dead. I am happy to say that I am well, and have just made my escape from what I call three years imprisonment in the so-called Southern Confederacy where I have been since the commencement of the war. It is the second attempt I have made within the past year, the first time was not so fortunate. I got away from Richmond, Va., easily, but was arrested near the Potomac River, brought back to Richmond and thrown into that Southern Bastile, Castle Thunder, where I remained six months. I was court-martialed as a deserter, and sentenced to be shot on the 31st August last, but, fortunately for me, President Davis issued his proclamation which saved me. A few days since I and six others determined to try and escape which thanks to God we succeeded in. I will now try and give you an account of my experience for the past three years, the cause of my first entrance into the rebel army &c. &c. I was, as you must be aware, employed as manager on the estate of M_____ in Louisiana. It was my intention to sail on the *Roscoe*, (from New Orleans to Liverpool), which vessel I believe was the last to sail from any Southern port previous to the blockade. I could not do it; the reason why, my employer, who pretended to be a truly patriotic Southerner, thought that as my services had been of some little use to him, my arm might possibly do the cause of Secession a benefit; thinking so, he would not pay me my justly earned wages, thereby preventing my leaving as I proposed; on his refusal to pay me, I wrote to Mr. Muir, who then was H.B. M. Consul at New Orleans, more than once, asking him to assist me in getting out of the country, and giving him my reason for not being able to go to New Orleans; the letters were, I believe, suppressed by my employer, who was post master; at least, I do not think Mr. Muir received them;

had he got them, I believe he would have given me the assistance I asked, for I was afterwards told he on all occasions gave Her Majesty's subjects all the protection and advice needful, which I much regret to say, other Consuls in the Seceded States did not. After failing to leave the country on that occasion, I was told by my employer he had no further use for me, nor could he pay me any portion of my wages; nowhere could I get employment, nor get away from there. At this time, the powers that then ruled got up a sort of proclamation, saying that all persons without employment would be arrested as vagrants and treated as such; just then a volunteer Company came along, and I was told I would be allowed the honor of becoming a soldier, which I did, though much against my inclination, as my sympathies were not at all with the rebels, neither have they from that hour to the present time, but what could I do? I was helpless after my enlistment. The company I thus became a member of proceeded to Memphis, Tennessee, and became incorporated in a Tennessee regiment. I must say that whilst I remained a member of that regiment I was amongst gentlemen, and was on all occasions treated as a gentleman. My advancement too was rapid, as I had the good fortune to please the Colonel, who was a truly good and worthy gentleman, although I considered him to be a mistaken one; he on all occasions did everything in his power for me. The only battle I participated in was the battle of Belmont, Missouri, 6th November, 1861, on which occasion I acted as Adjutant. Before the battle commenced, I vowed that for no cause whatever would my hand be the cause of depriving a Union soldier of life, and I kept my vow. 'Tis true I knocked down a member of the 7th Iowa regiment, but not before he shot a bullet through my cap, and broke my left shoulder with this musket. He surrendered to me, and we became good friends, he sharing with me the contents of his canteen and haversack, which, I assure you, were very acceptable to me. As I have, on all occasions, found the Southern papers to give false accounts of battles, I will tell you what I know of the battle of Belmont. About 8 o'clock A.M., the Federal forces under Generals Grant and McClernand advanced on Gen. Pillow's brigade, drove us back, and continued to do so until 3 o'clock, P.M., when Gen. Cheatham crossed the Mississippi with his brigade, when Gen. Grant retired, whether driven back by us or not, I cannot say. We, however, claimed the victory. The Memphis and other papers said we lost only four killed in that action; my regiment lost fourteen killed and a good many wounded, other regiments more heavily; in fact, our entire loss on that day was between two and three hundred killed, and many wounded. I defy any man to say I speak falsely; I have written too many reports on that subject to be mistaken. Soon after battle the sergeant major went home sick, I was appointed to the vacancy by the Colonel, which position I filled until the 4th January, 1862, when

I was discharged and left for Richmond, Va., on my way to Europe. I was given by my Colonel a first-rate recommendation to President Davis, by whom I was very kindly received. I stayed only a few days in Richmond, when I left for Norfolk, with a British Consular document in my possession, countersigned by the then Secretary of War, Mr. Benjamin; but two days did I remain there when I returned to Richmond at the request of a gentleman, who wished me to bear with me letters to his friends in Ireland. I did so, and two days after was arrested as a deserter from some company of which I had never heard, neither did I hear of it again, but yet I was kept a prisoner till July. When I was arrested I was taken before Gen. Winder, Provost Marshal General, at whose office I was searched, my money to the amount of \$1,763, and my consular papers taken from me. Neither papers nor money did I ever get from that day to this. I have always thought that Gen. Winder appropriated to his own use my money, for he does not bear the best character for honesty. It is said of him in Richmond, that before the war he swindled the U.S., and had to fly to the rebel capital. I have been also told that he is not above a good bribe. After my arrest I was placed in the county jail, where I was so fortunate as to make the acquaintance of a Lieutenant in the Federal Army. I was not long in jail when I was taken a second time before Gen. Winder, by whom I was kindly told I would be released if I would join the army. I said I would not, I wanted to return to my family in Ireland, and that I requested my money to be given back to me. I was told that the money was safe, and that I could get it whenever I consented to join the army, but that I could not be permitted to leave the Confederate states. On my again refusing to enter their d---d service, I was sent to the Confederate States prison, where I became a witness to many acts of cruelty which the Federal soldiers were made to suffer. I was shown by a Confederate prisoner a bullet which killed a soldier of the U.S.A., who was shot for looking out of the window; that was his only offence. About this time I saw an article in one of the Richmond papers, which purported to be from an English officer, who said he was in Richmond at the time it was reported that the soldier was shot, and that it was not the case. Now, whoever that officer is, he was misinformed on the subject, for I say, and can prove it, the man was shot, and I saw his blood and brains on the floor of the third or fourth story, and it can be proven by many who saw the wanton and murderous act committed. This was not at all the only case of cruelty committed at that time, which was after the first battle of Manassas, when the rebel soldiery were permitted, and in many cases encouraged, to commit acts of cruelty to the Federal prisoners in their hands. I was not long in the Confederate prison when I was appointed by the Surgeon in charge to the office of acting hospital steward, immediately afterwards the prison was removed to the notorious

Libby, on Cary street, where I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of many officers (some of whom are now Generals) of the Union army; also, the non-commissioned officers and privates, many of whom, I am sure, would willingly state, that I did them some little favors, and took good care of all who were under my charge in the hospital; in fact, many of them requested me to refer to them, should I ever get away from the country in which I was unwillingly detained. Were I to write to you all the petty acts of cruelty and annoyance I witnessed the prisoners receive at the hands of the commandant, Lieut. now Major Turner, and his Adjutant, Lieut. Emac, who received the sobriquet of Bowie Knife, you would, I fear say I exaggerated. I will, however, tell you one instance I witnessed. A Federal soldier was ordered to clean the arms of the guard, he refused, and was consequently made to mark time for several hours with a sentinel over him. The man, I suppose from fatigue ceased, and said he was not able to continue. The commandant came up and told the sentinel to stick the bayonet into the d---d Yankee, which command was obeyed, and the soldier was sent to his quarters. Next morning he was brought to the hospital where I saw his wound. Whilst I was at the prison, I more than once wrote to Gen. Winder, asking for a court martial, and that my money would be returned to me, but without avail. I also wrote to President Davis requesting an investigation, the letters in all cases myself handed to the commandant, who assured me he would deliver them. I do not think President Davis ever received any communication from me; had he done so, I would have had justice done me, for I believe him to be a just and Christian man, although a mistaken one. I also wrote to the Governor of Virginia, but there was no notice taken of my communication.

A short time previous to the battle of the Seven Pines, I was for the third time taken before Gen. Winder, and again told I would be liberated if I joined the army. On that occasion I told them I never would enter their service, that I was a British subject, and that I could not be forced into any measure. I was then sent back to prison and told my money was mislaid and could not be found. On my return to the prison hospital, I told of my interview to a U.S. officer, and to whom I can refer as to the truth of my statement. Whilst I was a prisoner, I was every day hearing of the bad treatment the Confederate prisoners received in the North, of that I know nothing, but I know the manner in which I saw the Union prisoners treated in the South. I was told by an Irishman, a member of a Louisiana regiment, that at the battle of the Seven Pines, he saw a certain Louisiana regiment take several, say 60 prisoners; a detail was made to conduct them to Richmond, they started, but it was not long before the detail returned, saying the prisoners died on the way; the fact is, the prisoners were shot, and I heard one of the detailed men

exult over the brutal act—saying dead men gave no trouble, and that was the best way to get rid of the damned Yankees—and I am sorry to say, that this was not the only time Federal soldiers were shot by their Southern captors, and I have heard Confederate officers boast of their men for committing such acts.

The day that the wounded prisoners were being brought in from the battlefield, I saw a Captain stand in the hospital door, and before any of the wounded were permitted to leave the ambulances, he went into them and took from the prisoners their pocket books, knives &c., which I have never heard were returned. A few days after this I got out of prison by a ruse; an officer came to the Libby prison to get 10 recruits for his company, and I went with him. I told him the circumstances of my case, and he kindly allowed me to go where I pleased, which I did, and remained out of the army some two months, during which time I stayed in the rebel capital, where I was daily witness to the many indignities to which foreigners and particularly British subjects were subjected. It was no uncommon thing to see a man arrested, and his papers taken from him and torn by the detective officers, who were in all cases from the dregs of society in Baltimore—men who would not enter the army, and who came to Richmond because they could not live at home. They were thus thrust on the citizens, by their countryman, Gen. Winder, and had from him license to do as they pleased; in fact, a reign of terror existed in Richmond, not far removed from that of the notorious Robespierre in France.

I have seen men taken from their families (British subjects) to the conscript camps. Often times there was no redress; sometimes Mr. Chidland would interfere, but generally the interference came too late; the poor fellows were immediately sent off to the army, and once there it was not easy to get them back. In this way much suffering was caused to many poor people who were enjoined by Her Majesty's proclamation to keep neutral. Many times have I heard the question asked, why will not our own government take some step for our protection? Those men had, by hard and honest industry, acquired a little competency, and surely it was not be wondered at if they did not wish to go away, and leave their all to the mercy of a set of men who did not scruple to encourage murder. In many cases it was impossible to go away, even if the parties wanted to. During this time I tried every way to obtain employment, but no, I was a British subject, and to be that, and walk round with British consulate documents, was as bad as to be a robber. In the month of September, 1862, I was again obliged to join a company, but as I entered it against my will, and never took the oath of allegiance, I felt myself perfectly at liberty to leave as soon as I found employment., which I did in November following. Perhaps you will say that my business was not very honorable, but it

was at least honest. I became a substitute agent, and there were many engaged in it who considered themselves very honorable and honest men. As a matter of course, it was a profitable business, but a dangerous one; for Gen. Winder issued an order prohibiting substitute agencies, and therefore the detectives were on the alert to arrest all in that line of business, although they were always willing, on the receipt of \$50 or \$100, to let us go on our way in peace. So long as you paid the officers well you need not fear them, but once refuse a detective money and you were done for. In March last I was arrested as a substitute agent and placed in Castle Thunder, from whence I made my escape very easily. I borrowed a colonel's uniform, and walked by the guards, they presented arms as I passed. I then got out of Richmond and crossed the Rappahannock river, to the Potomac, where I thought I was safe, but they did me the honor to send several officers after me, when I was re-arrested, and brought back to Castle Thunder the second time. I forgot to say that after I got out of Castle Thunder the first time, I was witness to the great riots which took place in Richmond, Petersburg and other places. The Richmond papers of the day stated that it was only Irish hags and w----s that participated in those riots. I was in the rebel capital at the time, and it was a hard matter to suppress the riot in that place. I am happy to state that it was not the Irish women of Richmond who got up the riot, but it was the starving wives and daughters of their own Virginia soldiers, with a good many of the so-called ladies of Richmond, and it was not bread alone that they sought after—it was clothing. I myself saw several ladies who each took three and four dress patterns and many other fancy articles.

Much has been said and written about Castle Thunder, but it falls far short of the reality. The conduct of the officers there is brutal to all. Capt. Alexander is a brute to all who are so unfortunate as to come within his reach, and his subordinates seem to vie with their superior in cruelty. It is a wonder to me that the Confederate authorities do not allow foreigners to leave the country. Surely it would be only fair to release men from a service that, do what they will, there is no credit accorded them. To show you to what extent the hatred of foreigners is carried, I not long since heard an officer (who was a member of a general court martial) say that, for his part, he would shoot every G-----d Irishman who might be brought before him, no matter for what offence, and yet this was a man sworn to do justice to all. When I was last in Castle thunder I saw a man shot (a Federal soldier) for looking out of the window of the Tobacco Factory opposite.

In September last the brigade I belonged to came to South Carolina, where I was when I fortunately made my escape. I must now tell you that provisions are hard to be got at. The soldier's ration now is, if marching, 1 1/3 pounds corn meal,

and $\frac{1}{3}$ pound of pork; if not marching, $1\frac{2}{3}$ pounds meal constitutes his entire daily ration. It is said that soldiers are re-enlisting for the war very willingly. I do not believe it, for two or three weeks since there was a great fight on James Island between the rebel troops. The time of service of some regiments had expired, and the men wanted to go home, but no, they would not be permitted to do so. They were conscripted, but the Georgians would not suffer such treatment, and therefore the fight, I know not with what result. All I know is, that the fight lasted for more than two hours. At Pocotaligo there was another fight for the same cause.

I will now tell you the way I was received by the Yankees, and show you the difference in the treatment of prisoners, &c. The Yankee prisoners are half starved in Richmond, and have their blanket taken from them. The Southern prisoners on this side receive the same rations as the Union soldiers, and if they want blankets and clothes receive them. Is that not returning good for evil? When we came here we were met with open arms and had every attention paid us, and all our wants supplied. I have seen an officer from the rebel army shed tears because he received such different treatment from what he had expected.

Sincerely do I wish that my pen was inspired, so that my feeble efforts at letter writing would be means of causing foreign governments to take some steps for the protection of their subjects in rebel American States; particularly the government of England, to whose attention I would call the fact. Her subjects are being daily forced into a service that they detest. If they refuse, their property is confiscated by the government, and their persons incarcerated in a loathsome prison. It is not so that there is now an opportunity afforded them to leave, for, since the British consuls were ordered away from the Confederacy, hard indeed is the lot of the poor British subject in the south. Forsaken by their own government, and not able to reach the country which has always been the home of the down-trodden and oppressed, he can only starve or enter the army. Irishmen are not wanted in the South but for the purpose of filling up the ranks. Thousands of them are in their graves, and many poor fellows maimed for life, are forgotten by the government for which they fought, and their families now are starving, for the authorities care not for any man when he ceases to be of use to them. In the Confederacy now they are putting every man between the ages of 16 and 45 years in the army. Even those men who put substitutes in their places are obliged to go in the army, although the government made an obligation to exempt all such. They make laws one day and break them the next. How can such a government stand? I can tell you that the Southern people, one and all, wish that times now were as they have been, three years back, and gladly would give up the struggle if they dared. Long ago have they found out what true liberty means. Liberty, indeed!—there is no such

thing known in the South at this time.

It is not easy to divine the cause of such intense hatred existing against England by the Confederates. One day the papers laud the Government—Russell and Palmerston particularly—and the next the most abusive epitaphs are unsparingly made use of. England withholds recognition, and the hopes of the Southern people are centered on foreign governments. Surely if such be the policy of Great Britain she should now and forever put an end to all hopes of recognition, and for the sake of her poor suffering subjects make a demand that they one and all be permitted to leave. Be not deceived by Southern papers or Southern agents. The cruelties committed at the South are atrocious. Were I to tell you all I have seen it would make your blood run cold. I have yet to learn if such acts are committed in the Northern States; however I should think they are not. I have heard that William Smith O'Brien is taking a great interest in American matters. Would it not be as well if he remembered '48, and turned his attention to his own business? He ought to profit thereby.

I am myself a British subject, owe allegiance to neither North nor South, yet I say to all Irishmen, if you join in this struggle at all, forget not the country in which you have homes, prosperous and happy, when the land of your birth could not afford you one. Remember that to be an Irishman in the South is sufficient cause to convict you of any crime, no matter how innocent you may be. 'Tis true I like not the South. I have received too many and saw too many acts of injustice done to speak in its favor. Yet God forbid that I would speak falsely. I regret to say that all I have written falls far short of the reality. Thank God, I am now away from their hands, and, believe me, I will endeavor to keep so.

Hoping soon to hear from you, with warmest regards to your worthy family, whom I hope are well, I am, my valued old friend, ever faithfully yours,



PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, HUGUENOT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, NEW PALTZ

Photograph of Peter LeFevre, 1860s. Josiah P. LeFevre Photograph Album
Photograph Collection. Huguenot Historical Society, New Paltz

Regional History Forum

Each issue of *The Hudson River Valley Review* includes the *Regional History Forum*, which highlights historic sites in the valley, exploring their historical significance as well as information for visitors today. Although due attention will be paid to sites of national visibility, HRVR will also highlight sites of regional significance. This issue features the *Senate House State Historic Site* and *West Point Foundry Preserve*. But we begin by reviewing the current exhibit on the Civil War at the *Huguenot Historical Society*. Please write us with suggestions for future Forum sections.

“I’m Now in Rebeldom”: New Paltz Soldiers in the Civil War

In May 2005, the Huguenot Historical Society in New Paltz introduced the exhibit *“I’m Now in Rebeldom”: New Paltz Soldiers in the Civil War*. Formally opened on May 28, during a symposium on the Civil War in New Paltz, the exhibit considers several aspects of the town’s experiences during the nation’s gravest crisis and reaches an emotional level that is characteristic of war-themed presentations.

Filling two rooms of the Howard Hasbrouck Grimm Gallery, the artifacts are drawn primarily from the Huguenot Historical Society’s own archival collections, which include hundreds of wartime letters. Excerpts from several of these are on prominent display. (The exhibition title—a quotation from New Paltz soldier Lindsay Howell—refers to his regiment’s assignment to occupation duty in Southern states during the latter years of the war.) A reading of these excerpts demonstrates that many soldiers were impressed with the landscapes around the Mississippi River, but the scenes only reminded them of another river: the Hudson. The homesickness of one soldier, Charles Ackert, is evident in his letter home, published in the *New Paltz Times* (and also excerpted in the exhibit): “Yet we long for the snows and frosts of our own dear Northern homes for the glad faces of those we love would lend its bleak scenes a beauty which no Southern clime can ever equal.” Other artifacts on display include a recruitment poster for the 175th New York Regiment (from Kingston), reproductions of military enrollment lists and casualty reports, and photographic reproductions of several paintings from the Library of Congress and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans.

Five months in the making, the exhibit focuses not just on soldiers, but also the families they left behind. Displayed text explains that most of the residents of New Paltz supported the Union cause during the Civil War, though as a heav-

Name	Age	White or Colored	Profession or Trade
Louis Coe	24	White	Laborer
Abel Dapton	30	"	Farmer
Isaac Sejwer	31	"	"
Demond Sejwer	28	"	Laborer
Isaac Crawley	34	"	"
Amos Sejwer	25	"	"
John B. Elting	23	"	"
Joseph Elting	21	"	"
Louis H. Sejwer	25	"	"
John Willck	24	"	"
Thomas Harting	23	"	"
Nathan McCutchen	24	"	"
Isaac Sejwer	30	"	Farmer
John B. Elting	22	"	Laborer
Wm. Taylor Johnson	33	Black	"
Abraham Sejwer	28	White	"
Joseph B. Sejwer	26	"	"

Page from Military enrollment list, 1863
New Paltz Town Records (1677-1932)

ily Democratic area (as was much of New York State), it was often critical of Republican President Abraham Lincoln. Residents filled the void of departed soldiers and contributed to the war effort as best they could. Among the homespun supplies they furnished for the troops were mittens, quilts, socks, pillows and pillowcases, medicine, jellies, and food. Maria DuBois, at age 83, was also willing to lend a hand making clothes, vowing in one excerpt to “keep her needle at work as long as her eyesight is spared and a soldier is in need.” (Drawings of instructions on how to sew these supplies surround the quotation.)

Eliza Ackert took over the editorship of the *New Paltz Times* in her husband’s stead and published many of his letters for the community. Her picture, a photograph of her printing office, and an advertisement for the *Times* are all on exhibit. Unfortunately, grief was a constant companion of several residents’ families. On view is the Thanksgiving Day, 1864, diary entry of Jane LeFevre, who laments the loss of her brother Johannes, who had died at Winchester, Virginia, four days earlier.

Also shown are the instruments of war—a rifled musket, a musketoon (a smaller-length firearm), cavalry saber, an infantry sword, and a presentation sword given to officers in the Union Army. Camp life is also an important aspect of the exhibit. Remnants displayed from the field gear of Lieutenant Johannes LeFevre, who served with the 175th Regiment, include a cloth and paper chess set, a stencil, and a small Bible. In the many hours of stand-down time between battles, these were valuable possessions. Another wall section shows how those who went to serve the Union did not always do so in combat. Three New Paltz surgeons—Solomon Hasbrouck, Abraham Eltinge Crispell, and John Miller—were based in Washington, D.C., serving in hospitals for the wounded. Photographs of one of these hospitals are on display.

The exhibit was curated by Eric Roth, Huguenot Historical Society’s librarian and archivist, and Ian Stewart, head of Physical Maintenance. Additional assistance was provided by Leslie LeFevre Stratton, curator of Collections, and Laurence M. Hauptman, Distinguished Professor of History, State University of New York at New Paltz. Funding was made possible by the New York State Council for the Humanities.

—Neil Bhatiya



Rear of the Senate House with gardens, showing the original portion—now with brick facing—and the addition on the left

Senate House State Historic Site

The Senate House State Historic Site is located in the uptown Stockade District of Kingston, on a corner lot that once belonged to Pieter Stuyvesant. The house was originally constructed in 1676 by Wessele Ten Broeck and was preserved by New York State as its second State Historic Site in 1887. It remains today as a heritage site, museum, and community resource.

The house as built in 1676 was a traditional Dutch dwelling, one story with a steep roof. Living, cooking, and sleeping took place in one room, with a basement and an attic garret for additional sleeping or storage space. Additions to the north and south were made to the house in the mid-eighteenth century, and the original interior was lost when the British burned Kingston in October 1777. What stands today was rebuilt in 1778. (You have to look at the stonework and other details to trace its earlier evolution.) The interior is typical of an English-style colonial dwelling, which the original house was converted to over time.

That evolution was a microcosm of the larger change happening in America's colonial society, a change that began when the English assumed control of the colony in 1664. The dwelling's one original room was eventually divided and added onto so that the house became a variation on the English tradition of a



CHRIS PRYSLIOPSKI

**The Colonial Revival Museum building
built in the 1920s**



CHRIS PRYSLIOPSKI

**Front entry to the Senate House on the
corner of John and Fair Streets**

decorated main hall flanked by parlors, one formal and one informal. This main hall served as an opportunity for the owner to display items that would immediately signify the host's importance. In addition to the creation of an entry hall and parlors, the "new" house featured separate bedrooms and a semi-detached kitchen.

This is the era that the staff of the Senate House interprets for visitors today. It has been refurnished with artifacts and replicas from the period that represent what any typical Kingston dwelling would have looked like in the late-eighteenth century. Assembled is a collection of furniture, kitchenware, bedroom items, and examples of what might have been found in the chamber occupied by the fledgling New York State Senate, including reproduction reading glasses, quill pens, a table, and chairs.

That is another story the house tells: In addition to being representative of daily life in Kingston circa 1778, it is where the New York State Senate took refuge (in exchange for daily rent) when it arrived in Kingston in September 1777. The owner then was Abraham Van Gaasbeek, a widower with an empty house whose business of shipping goods between Kingston and New York City had been disrupted by the same events that had driven the senate further and further north.

Following their Declaration of Independence in July 1776, the colonies began assembling committees to draft individual constitutions for each new state. The New York State Convention met in New York City to do this through December of that year, when they were forced to flee north as the British took control of Manhattan. They stopped briefly in White Plains, but had to leave again as the British advanced up the Hudson. They met briefly at the Dutch Reformed Church in Fishkill, but there was an epidemic of smallpox, so they continued north to Kingston, which had already acquired the reputation as a "nursery for every villainous rebel in the country."

At the time, Kingston was the third largest city in the state—after New York and Albany—with more than 100 houses and approximately 2,000 residents between its uptown and waterfront. The constitution was finished here, its draft adopted on April 20, 1777, on the steps of the courthouse on Wall Street.

That accomplished, the representatives set out to fill their new government, with the bicameral legislature and judicial branch that remain today. By September of that year, the state's fledgling judiciary was meeting in the courthouse, the assembly was convened at Bogardus Tavern, and seventeen of the twenty-four appointed representatives in the senate assembled at Van Gaasbeek's house. All of this activity was treasonous in the eyes of the British Empire; if any of the participants in this government were caught, they would be hanged as traitors.

And the British were getting closer to the capital every day. The 1777 Campaign was a three-pronged attack on the colonies, its intent to divide the northern and southern allies by taking control of the Hudson River. The British were winning battles and gaining ground as they descended from Canada, and were temporarily being held at bay to the south by the great chain and fortifications at Fort Montgomery, in the Hudson Highlands.

Fort Montgomery fell on October 6, 1777. The British sank the chain after taking the fort, then sailed north. On October 13, as Burgoyne was losing at Saratoga, Sir Henry Clinton passed Esopus and came in range of Ponchokie Heights—above the Rondout waterfront—where the Patriots opened fire from a small battery. The British logs do not record any damage received from these rounds, but they do explain that this provocation brought them ashore, and that additional shots fired once they had landed were license to destroy the village. They marched from Kingston Point to the Stockade, sacking and burning all but one house along the way. They continued this strategy as they sailed further north, getting as far as Robert Livingston's Clermont before news of Burgoyne's surrender reached them and they turned back (but not before burning the Livingston estate as well). Instead of dividing the colonies, the British operations on the Hudson wound up uniting the Patriots in their outrage over atrocities such as the burning of Kingston.

One hundred and ten years later, a local group of preservationists petitioned the state to purchase and preserve the house as a museum that would tell the story of life in eighteenth-century Kingston. The Senate House State Historic Site opened its doors for business in 1887, and the people of Kingston brought artifacts by the trunk-load; attics, basements, and barns were emptied of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century heirlooms that were donated to the museum to help tell the

building's story. By 1920, when a local collector offered to donate his manuscript collection, the little house was already full to the rafters. The collector also had concerns about fire safety, so he offered his collection with the caveat that New York build a fireproof building to house the 25,000 seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century manuscripts. The state accepted the terms and built a Colonial Revival museum that is today considered another of Kingston's historic treasures. The collection that inspired it is still housed there. (Known as the DeWitt Manuscript Collection, it includes signatures of presidents and famous Americans.)

The other major collection housed in the 1920s museum pertains to Kingston native John Vanderlyn. A precursor of the Hudson River School artists, Vanderlyn was himself the second of three generations of painters in his family. He is regaled as the first American-born artist trained in Europe.

Vanderlyn learned by copying the works of "masters." One such work he painted was a version of Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Aaron Burr, which Major Peter Van Gaasbeek purchased from the young artist and brought to the attention of its subject. Taken with the likeness, Burr invited Vanderlyn into his home in 1795 to paint more portraits; later that year, he recommended Vanderlyn to Stuart for formal education. Stuart soon returned the artist to Burr, claiming that he had nothing left to teach him, and suggesting he be sent to Paris. Vanderlyn sailed for France in 1796 under Burr's continued patronage. He spent four years there, studying with Francois Andre Vincent and painting among such great artists as Jean-Auguste Ingres and Jacques-Louis David.

As the collection on display suggests, this was a time of quick maturity for the artist. Within a few years, his work underwent a transition from budding talent to an experienced precision. Paris seemed as agreeable to Vanderlyn as he was to it; his work was well received by the public and his painting of Caius Marius (1807) received a gold star from Napoleon in 1808.

When he returned to America, the artist had every reason to expect similar acclaim at home. His hopes high, Vanderlyn set out to paint scenes from classical mythology and young America's history—narratives emphasizing important events. In 1812, he presented the public with *Ariadne Asleep on the Island of Naxos*. But he had underestimated the American public's prudish ways. The gallery displaying it so feared the repercussions of a man and woman standing together before the languid nakedness of the despoiled Ariadne that viewing hours were split between male and female audiences. Even the redemption of this particular work was tinged with Puritanical insult: a steamboat captain offered to buy it, but only if the artist cloaked his model. Vanderlyn took the commission and repro-

duced the painting, but this time with Ariadne under a sheet of gauze. This version was hung in the captain's extravagant floating den. (The original is in the collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia.)

Sadly, *Ariadne* was not the only artistic misadventure to befall the artist upon his return home. With the eye of an engineer, Vanderlyn had produced studies of the landscape at Versailles. These studies can be seen at the Senate House and show how he laid a grid over his subject that would help him to render it flat and then bend it to form a panorama. The panorama depicted a scene from the early nineteenth century populated with historical figures. The artist included himself drawing a viewer's attention to Czar Alexander I and the King of Prussia standing in the gardens. Opening in 1817, the finished painting measured twelve feet high by 168 feet long, mounted around the inside of a rotunda that the artist had built near the present-day site of City Hall in Manhattan. At the time, panoramas were a great attraction throughout Europe, a sort of "virtual reality" of the early nineteenth century.

However, this proved another error in translation. Vanderlyn had financed the project by selling shares in it ahead of time, and the concept was well enough received to execute the project. But when the financiers entered the rotunda and looked around to find themselves in a foreign place with foreign people, the exotic nature of the experience was lost. Critics slammed the work as being off-topic (not American) and were not impressed by the panoramic experience. The panorama followed Vanderlyn to his indebted grave—he reassembled it time and again across the country, but it never covered its own expense or began to see any profit. Fortunately, the huge painting was preserved and can be viewed in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

There were some commissions, most notably *The Landing of Columbus at the Island of Guanahani, West Indies, October 12th, 1492*, which hangs in the U.S. Capitol. But most of the money Vanderlyn made came from portraiture. No would-be patrons were interested in grand stories of Greek myth or American origins, but many wanted to see themselves or their families immortalized by the artist's



CHRIS PRYSLIOPSKI

Kitchen of the Senate House



CHRIS PRYSLIOPSKI

Hearth in front bedroom

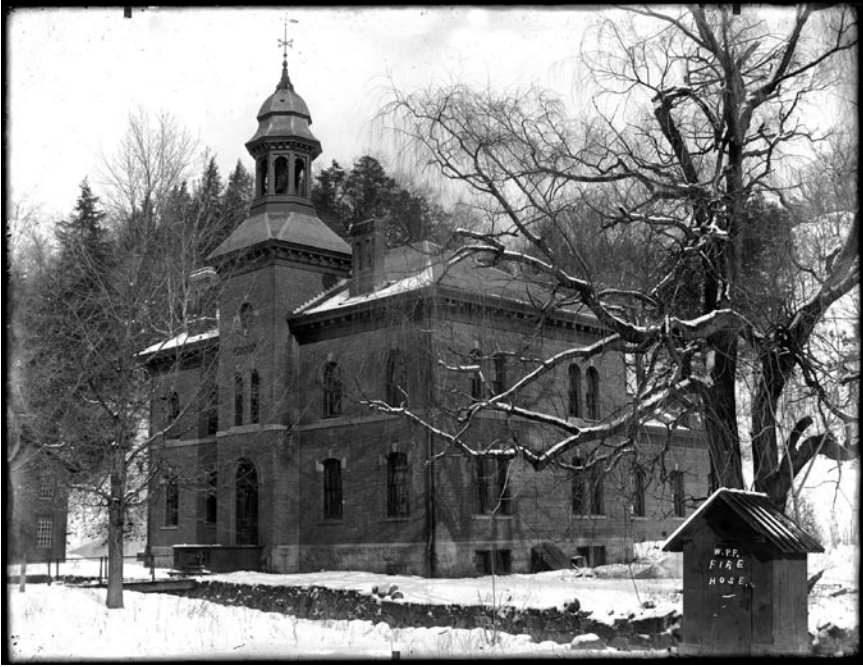
brush. John Vanderlyn died miserable and penniless in 1855. One evening he checked into the hotel that still stands across from the Senate House property in uptown Kingston and was found dead in his room the next morning.

But the defiant story of the Senate House and the melancholy epic of John Vanderlyn are not the only tales told here. The site also includes the Loughran House, used as an additional museum and office space, and the nearby Heritage Area Visitors' Center, which offers visitor information, brochures on area attractions, and temporary exhibits.

One thing the stories here share—which is a testament to both the size of eighteenth-century America and the talents of the storytellers on staff—is that all of the various strands are intertwined. You will see not only how local individuals and movements influenced one another, but how the inhabitants of historic Kingston affected national and international events as well.

—Christopher Pryslopsi

The Senate House State Historic Site is located in Kingston at 296 Fair Street, online at: <http://nysparks.state.ny.us/sites/info.asp?siteID=26>, and can be reached by phone at 845-338-2786. It is open from April 7 through Oct. 31 Mon., Wed., and Sat. 10 a.m.–5 p.m., and Sun. 11–5 p.m. Admission: \$4 adults, \$3 NYS senior citizens/groups, \$1 children 5–12; children under 5 are admitted free. The site is also open year-round by appointment. Group tours are available year-round, and must be scheduled in advance. The Heritage Area Visitors' Center is located at 308 Clinton Avenue.



PUTNAM COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY & FOUNDRY SCHOOL MUSEUM, COLD SPRING, NEW YORK

The West Point Foundry Office Building circa 1890

Preserving an Icon of Prosperity: The Story of the West Point Foundry's 1865 Office Building

During the first few months of 1865, workers at the West Point Foundry were busy casting iron cannons and shot for use in the Civil War by the United States Army and Navy. As many as 1,500 men worked in dozens of buildings packed within a narrow, forty-acre valley located within the limits of what became the Village of Cold Spring. Yet today the only building that remains of this once bustling facility is the 1865 Office Building, constructed during the wave of prosperity that marked the war years. The site's current owner is Scenic Hudson, an environmental group that protects and enhances the Hudson River and its majestic landscape. The organization is leading an initiative to preserve and interpret the site, known as the West Point Foundry Preserve, for the public. Scenic Hudson is sponsoring historical and archaeological research to establish the factual parameters for historical interpretation, has contracted with an arborist and tree service to care for the now-forested landscape, and most recently has

acquired engineering and architectural services to stabilize the deteriorating 1865 Office Building. This article will describe the current efforts, with a focus on the Civil War-era office building.

The Foundry

After the War of 1812, the Madison administration recognized the need to expand ordnance production and stimulated the development of four foundries around the country: one in Pittsburgh; one in Richmond, Virginia; one in Georgetown, near Washington, D.C.; and one in the Hudson Valley, just upriver from the new United States Military Academy at West Point. The West Point Foundry Association, named after the most prominent geographical feature in the nearby landscape, was formed in 1817 by a group of investors led by Gouverneur Kemble. Construction and production began that year, with the first cast items available a year later. Start-up costs were supported by an advanced payment for an order of heavy artillery to be delivered to the federal government during the first few years. In addition to their ordnance products, the foundry also cast a range of other goods, including mill equipment, water systems, and a variety of domestic items. It produced numbers of steam engines, both for marine service and for use in locomotives, including the first locomotive manufactured in the United States, the *Best Friend*. Product lines included machinery for the sugar and cotton industries, portions of the Croton Aqueduct (to take water to New York City), the pumping engine for Philadelphia's Fairmount Waterworks, and a pumping engine for the Brooklyn Navy Yard dry dock.¹

Cold Spring is located about fifty miles north of New York City on the Hudson River. This location provided the West Point Foundry with many advantages, including easy transportation up and down the river and access to local raw materials such as iron ore, casting sand, and wood for charcoal. The young military academy across the river afforded protection during times of conflict. Finally, the foundry sat in a valley through which flowed Foundry Brook. Dropping about 100 feet vertically over a distance of 1,400 feet, from the brook provided the needed waterpower for the facility with the aid of a series of dams.

During the early years, an experienced foundryman from Ireland named William Young served as superintendent. By 1837, Robert Parker Parrott was hired to run the operation and Gouverneur Kemble reduced his direct involvement. Between 1851 and 1867, Parrott leased the West Point Foundry. As a former Army inspector of ordnance assigned to the foundry, he was familiar with the challenges of ordnance production. During his management of the operations, he experimented with ordnance design; by 1860, he had developed a rifled cannon



The Office Building in 2005

commonly referred to as the Parrott gun—a cast-iron gun with a rifled bore and a wrought-iron reinforced breech. It spun its close-fitting projectiles as they exited the bore, resulting in greater range and accuracy than comparable smoothbore weapons of the time. The wrought-iron reinforcement of the cannon's breech allowed Parrott guns to withstand the increased pressure generated by the tight-fitting projectiles. This weapon was highly favored by the Union military.

The foundry manufactured 2,500 Parrott guns by 1865.² Just four years earlier, a reporter for *Harper's Weekly* estimated that foundry workers produced twenty-five cannons and 7,000 projectiles a week.³ During the height of the Civil War, the U.S. Army and Navy each spent as much as \$100,000 during some months on West Point Foundry guns, projectiles, and gun carriages. The Parrott gun not only brought the West Point Foundry fame during the war, but also generated significant profit and capital. The primary expression of that capital was in the form of a brick office building, constructed in 1865 on the eastern bank of Foundry Brook within the foundry complex. This new office building, which replaced a smaller office located in the heart of the complex, was a deliberate expression of the foundry's prosperity during the war.

The Office Building

The office building is labeled "OFFICE.1865" on a cast-iron sign mounted above the main entrance. Parrott decided on a brick construction and spared no expense, including a detailed plaster and wood interior that only survives in pieces today.

It was an elegant, “white collar” building on a “blue collar site.” The Italianate-style brick structure is consistent with mid-nineteenth-century commercial and civic buildings like those illustrated in Samuel Sloan’s 1851 pattern book, *The Model Architect*. The two-story building is composed of two wings, a symmetrical front with a central tower and a more utilitarian rear portion. The front (western) facade is finished in a higher grade of brickwork than the other three sides. The main entry, centered under the tower, is reached via stairs and a bridge over the stream. The tower housed a large cast-iron bell that used to call foundry employees to and from work. (It has since been removed to the local school.) The ground floor contains two parlors on the right and a large, grand room on the left. Existing flue penetrations indicate that these were likely heated by wood- or coal-burning stoves. The office building also contained a walk-in safe to store company and employee money. Surviving photographs from the late nineteenth century show fashionably dressed women sitting in one of the parlors, which was fitted out as a manager’s office. The finishes in the room, and the surviving fragments, are similar to those of other high-end mid-nineteenth-century residences and commercial buildings throughout the Hudson Valley. In addition to managers and their assistants, occupants were likely accountants and cashiers (near the walk-in safe) and draftsmen laying out the patterns that would be fabricated in the pattern shops.

The West Point Foundry’s 1865 Office Building is a symbol of the foundry’s peak of production and the beginning of its demise. After the war, the foundry canceled the government’s outstanding contracts, absorbing a substantial loss. Moreover, the rise of steel production in the late nineteenth century curtailed demand for cast-iron products in both the private and public sectors. Foundry operations gradually slowed during the late nineteenth century and ceased early in the twentieth century. A variety of tenants, including a silk-dying works, continued to use the building during the early twentieth century. However, by the 1940s it was abandoned.

The building fell into ruin over the next fifty years from neglect and deterioration. When Scenic Hudson purchased the eighty-seven-acre property in 1996, the structure was given immediate attention. To help arrest further deterioration, a temporary roof was installed and the distinctive bell tower was removed and covered. Scenic Hudson is committed to preserving the building, which serves as an icon for the West Point Foundry Preserve, and to transforming this former industrial landscape into a dynamic hands-on educational resource.

Research

To learn more about the history of the site, a long-term research program begun by Scenic Hudson engaged the Industrial Archaeology faculty at Michigan Technological University (MTU). Since 2001, archaeological research at the foundry has been directed toward two parallel, yet complementary objectives. MTU field school crews are excavating the site to recover technical details on foundry operations as well as to learn about everyday life among foundry workers. Drawing together diverse lines of evidence will help narrate the story of this early industrial workplace and contribute to a wide range of academic discussions in industrial and historical archaeology, the history of technology, and the cultural anthropology of industrial communities. Concurrent with these academic goals, Scenic Hudson is developing a strategy for the site's public interpretation, which will draw visitors who want to learn about the contributions the West Point Foundry made to local, national, and international events. MTU archaeological researchers form one part of this developing interpretive plan. Field staff and volunteers speak casually with visitors about site history and the research process, discuss interpretation with members of the local community, and contribute ideas about what and how the site's elements should be interpreted.

During the 2003 and 2004 field seasons, MTU archaeologists investigated the 1865 Office Building. Each summer, two excavation units exposed portions of the building's foundation and helped illuminate the construction and destruction history of the building. Excavation units contained evidence of drainage pipes, architectural elements such as multicolored roofing slate and window glass, and chemical bottles from the silk-dyeing factory. The building has settled over time, and archaeological evidence indicates that the foundation in the back of the building was more substantial than that of the front, which has caused the front to drop. By identifying a burned layer of soil in the back of the office, MTU students also confirmed the suspicion of a fire sometime in the twentieth century.

In 2003, Scenic Hudson contracted with the firm of Stephen Tilly, Architect, to prepare a condition-assessment report and an adaptive-reuse study for the building. From May through July 2003, a team from the Tilly office and a structural engineer from Robert Silman, Associates, reviewed materials collected and prepared by MTU, as well as the holdings of the Putnam County Historical Society & Foundry School Museum. They also examined the condition of the office building and some of the outlying masonry structures at the preserve.

The archives held little documentation of the office building itself—scant drawings and a few photographs, some in which the building is a tiny detail. The team has not been able to determine the name of the architect, if there was one.

The structure held forensic riches for the architects and engineer, however. Its advanced state of deterioration had the virtue of revealing to the team otherwise concealed aspects of the building's construction. Primarily, the building's state underlined the urgency of proceeding with a significant stabilization program.

The architectural team's approach to the ruin mimicked MTU's archaeological explorations of the site—a careful peeling back of material and testing of hypotheses as work proceeded. Ghosts of stair stringers and floor joists revealed the location of the rear wing's second floor. The action of vandals and weather helped the team discover that the builders employed plaster lathing for a structural purpose and incorporated bits of cast-iron scrap in the construction. Interwoven bricks at the junction of the two wings confirmed their contemporaneity. The structure shows some major fault lines, but surviving original crack patching in the interior plaster suggests that this settlement occurred early in the building's life and has not continued. The ten-inch tilt off vertical observed by the team at the northwest corner, therefore, is of long standing.

Preservation

There were two major threats to the building's survival: large, vulnerable trees on an adjoining hillside that were aimed directly at the front wing and large holes in both first- and second-floor assemblies that might not provide enough resistance to prevent the two stories of weakened masonry walls from falling in. A qualified contractor removed the trees, which were among sixty-five trees in various locations around the site that had been identified by an arborist as hazards. The architectural team prepared detailed drawings to guide the stabilization. Since the stabilization scope exceeded the available budget, the documents incorporated a triage system that allowed the contractor and design team to shift their emphasis to the highest priority items that emerged as the actual work proceeded from an extensive cleanup of debris from previous collapses to selective demolition, temporary shoring and scaffolding, and finally structural rehabilitation and restoration.

The contractor's scope included careful documentation, with drawings and photography, of conditions prior to, during, and after the stabilization process. All salvageable materials that were removed or uncovered in the debris sorting during the stabilization process (including timbers, bricks, and window casings) were stockpiled for future use when the building's future is determined. Though the site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the building is not. However, all work was carried out in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Those standards define rehabilitation as “the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values.” The stabilization strategies were also designed to be consistent with three possible future “contemporary uses” for the building that the team presented to Scenic Hudson:

1. Stabilized Ruin—a three-dimensional landscape. The building would be an unheated, open-air structure with only its ground floor accessible to the public. The rear wing would be a walled garden with stabilized walls and an earthen or paved floor. The building could be electrified for night lighting and exhibits, possibly including *son et lumiere*. Open to the elements, and without permanent occupants, the building in this case would require protection. While the site in this state would capture the romance of the ruin and evince the post-1865 battle between nature and the built environment, the stabilized ruin would also require a significant investment in interpretation to tell its story to visitors.

2. Hybrid—a restored front wing and a stabilized walled-garden courtyard in the rear. The front wing would be enclosed and fully rehabilitated for public use on the ground floor and limited office use on the upper floor. The rear wing would be treated as a stabilized ruin. Preserving the ruined portion would help engage visitors in the processes that have been acting on the building and the site as a whole, in addition to being a significantly less costly option than the reconstruction of the rear wing. The rehabilitated and occupied front portion would convey the heady days of its original construction, and it could balance and protect the more poignant and vulnerable rear-wing ruin.

3. Full Restoration. The front wing would be enclosed and restored, and the rear wing completely reconstructed. This is the most ambitious project, and in all likelihood the most expensive. A possible drawback is that a polished, complete building might dampen the imaginative connections and conjecture possible elsewhere on this intriguing site. It might sacrifice some of the compelling qualities of the ruin, evidence of the battle between man and nature that characterizes the site’s history.

All three scenarios will include the reinstallation of the restored or reconstructed bell tower cupola and development of handicapped accessibility to the 1865 Office Building. Each option offers unique opportunities and challenges,

including how the building's use relates to the larger site and to a visitor's experience, and how the management and operations of each would be undertaken. At present, a chain-link fence to deter vandalism surrounds the building, and tours are offered periodically by Scenic Hudson. By virtue of its recent stabilization, the building has been strengthened, protected, and allowed to breathe. As archaeology on the site proceeds, and as a plan for public access is developed, the 1865 Office Building is positioned once again to play an instrumental role at this historic site. The building will draw visitors into a landscape that provides an immediate connection to our past and the West Point Foundry's role in shaping our nation.

—Patrick Martin, Elizabeth Norris, Rita Shaheen,
Stephen Tilly, and Elizabeth Martin

Footnotes

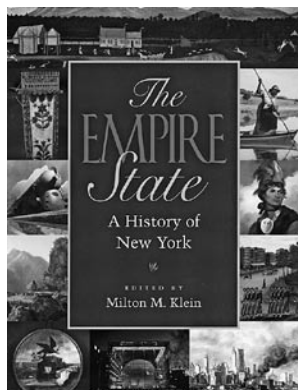
1. Factual evidence included in this short essay stem from research done by Rutsch, Edward, et al. *The West Point Foundry Site Cold Spring, Putnam County, New York*. Newton, New Jersey: Cultural Resource Management Services, 1979.
2. Robert Parrott, *Heavy Ordnance. Reports of Committees of the United State Senate Second Session, 38th Congress, Joint Committee on Conduct and Expenditures of War, 1865*, Senate Report No. 142, Part 2, Serial I 213, p. 137.
3. *Harper's Weekly* Vol. 5, No. 246, September 14, 1861, p. 580

Book Review

The Empire State: A History of New York, ed. Milton M. Klein. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001. xx, 837 pp. Cloth, \$45, ISBN 0-8014-3866-7)

In 2001, *The Empire State: A History of New York*, edited by Milton M. Klein, was welcomed as the long-anticipated replacement for David Ellis's *A History of New York State*, which had been out of print for many years. (In fact, the trustees of the New York State Historical Society inaugurated work on this updated, one-volume history of the state in the late 1980s.) The book is divided into seven chronological sections written by six specialist scholars: Oliver A. Rink ("Before the English"), Ronald W. Howard ("The English Province"), Edward Countryman ("From Revolution to Statehood"), Ray Gunn ("Antebellum Society and Politics"), Paula Baker ("The Gilded Age"), and Joel Schwartz ("The Triumph of Liberalism" and "The Empire State in a Changing World"). Initial reviews of the new text spoke glowingly of "a rich resource and reliable guide," "a stunning achievement in terms of research, coverage, depth of analysis, and the clarity of its writing," and "a standard reference work for many scholars and teachers." Yet, according to its forward, one of the purposes of *The Empire State* is "to satisfy the growing demand from teachers and students for a text at once authoritative and manageable." How well does the current volume live up its own criteria? Last fall, I decided to test it on the students in my upper-level New York State history course.

A book taking more than a decade to complete and written by six authors might be expected to have something for everyone, and readers can indeed find a wealth of information about state history between its covers. At the same time, a taste from this volume works better than a meal. Each of the seven parts appears to exist as a discrete unit, without the continuity and attempt at an overarching narrative flow one finds in most college texts, even those written by multiple authors. The book often seems uneven and unbalanced—repetitive in some places, overly detailed in others, and completely neglecting several expected topics. For example, the Constitutional Convention of 1821 is described by both Countryman and Gunn in two different sections, seventy pages apart. At times, the reader is overwhelmed by excessively detailed sections on politics; for example, the chapter on "Provincial and Imperial Politics" includes twelve consecutive



pages on the career of James DeLancey. In contrast, one is disappointed by only a page and a quarter of text on the War of 1812, a mere page on the Hudson River School of painting, and three single-line mentions of Frederick Douglass on three different pages. Even more surprising, there appears to be no mention at all of either Sojourner Truth or Harriet Tubman, despite their important associations with New York State.

In terms of teaching, Klein's *Empire State* lacks basic maps (of, say, Native American tribes, areas of French and Dutch settlement, the military campaigns of the French and Indian and Revolutionary campaigns, or major railway lines). Nor is the unique geography of the state—so central to New York history—described or discussed beyond a basic map reproduced inside the covers. Attractive color plates are inserted into the center of the book but never incorporated into the text. For instance, paintings by Charles Burchfield and Reginald Marsh are reproduced, yet their names don't even appear in the discussion of modern art. Instead, numerous other artists are listed with no illustrations of their work. More coordination between illustrations and text would have made sense.

Overall, the students complained that this text was difficult to absorb. Inundated by detail, they found recognizing the most vital points from the reading a challenge. In addition, students were disappointed that, despite its claim to provide "equal coverage to 'upstate' and 'downstate' events and people," the book concentrates largely on New York City and Albany, with some mention of Buffalo and Rochester, and only cursory coverage of the rest of the state. (Of the 30 cities and towns important enough to be marked on the map reproduced across the inside covers, a full third are never mentioned in the text, according to the index.) And, at 734 pages of text plus an additional 100 pages of back matter, *The Empire State* is hardly compact or indeed manageable for a college text.

It may seem ungracious to criticize this mammoth, ambitious work, and especially the editing of Milton M. Klein, who died last year. Probably no book could fulfill the multiple goals set for this volume. There is also no doubt that *Empire State* fills a great void by providing an updated reference work on New York State history. The dense chapters offer an excellent resource for preparing lectures in those areas where one's knowledge of state history is spotty. Unfortunately, as for an informative and engaging text to use in our college courses, teachers and students continue to wait.

—Susan Ingalls Lewis

The writer is Assistant Professor of History at the State University of New York at New Paltz

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